

# BONUS COLLECTION Macworld

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The Mac Product Experts

## Power Guide: 100 Mac Gems



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New and  
Updated  
Reviews of  
Awesome  
Free and  
Low-Cost  
Software

# 50 MAC GEMS

Every month, the *Mac Gems* column and Weblog bring you reviews of the best free and low-cost applications for OS X. But with new utilities released daily, it's impossible to keep up with them all—so here's a supersized batch of cool software bargains, 50 programs that you may have missed or that are worth another look. And they're all just a few mouse-clicks away.

{ **By Dan Frakes** }

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL SLACK

## 50 MAC GEMS

### BATTERY-STATUS MONITOR

#### Battorox 1.8

Apple's battery-status menu item tells you how much life your PowerBook's or iBook's battery has left (or how much time is left before it'll be fully charged), but for more-detailed information, check out Battorox (🔋🔋🔋). It displays your battery's initial and current capacity, cycle count (how many charge cycles your battery has been through), voltage, and temperature. Battorox doesn't work with all PowerBook models (some lack the necessary hardware), but it's a useful tool if you can use it (free; [www.branox.com](http://www.branox.com)).

### RSS-FEED CREATOR

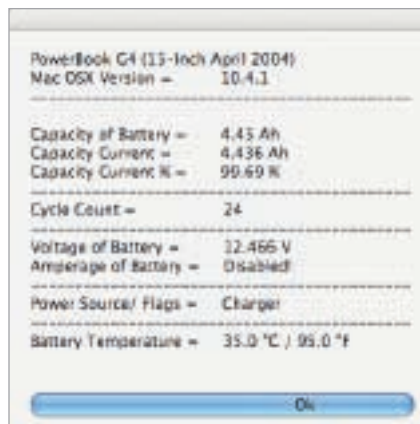
#### Feeder 1.1.3

If you want to create your own RSS feed but don't know how, Feeder (🔗🔗🔗) is for you. You provide the articles, and Feeder produces RSS 2.0-compatible feed files that can include formatted text, links, images, and even Podcast enclosures. Customizable templates, live previews, and a simple interface make the process easy—but Feeder also has many advanced features. When you're ready, you can publish your feed to a Web site, an FTP or SFTP server, or a .Mac account (\$30; [www.reinventedsoftware.com](http://www.reinventedsoftware.com)).

### FILE EXTRACTOR

#### File Juicer 3.4

Drop a file or package onto File Juicer (🔍🔍🔍), and it will search the contents and extract any recognizable JPEG, PNG, GIF, PDF, BMP, WMF, EMF, PICT, TIFF, Flash, Zip, HTML, WAV, MP3, AVI, MOV, MPG, WMV, MP4, AU, AIFF or text files contained inside. This is a great way to extract images or sound files from applications or PowerPoint presentations. File Juicer can even extract images and Flash files from Win-



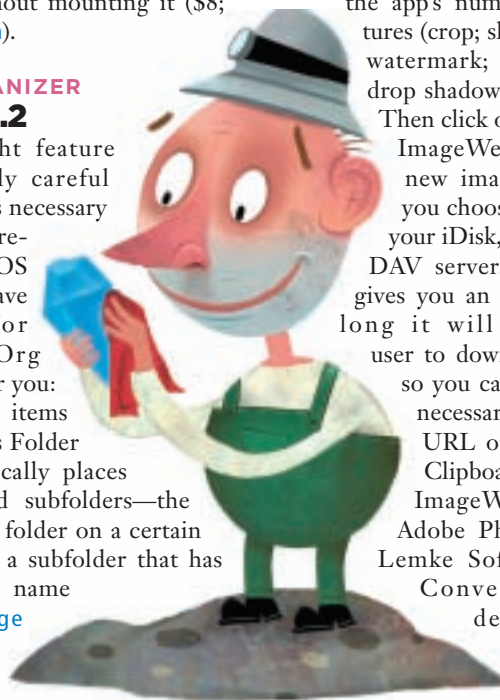
**High Voltage** Battorox tells you everything you want to know about your laptop battery.

dows .exe archives and rescue files from corrupt disk images. I sometimes use File Juicer to view the contents of a mysterious .dmg image without mounting it (\$8; [www.echoone.com](http://www.echoone.com)).

### FOLDER ORGANIZER

#### FolderOrg 1.2

Tiger's Spotlight feature makes extremely careful organization less necessary than it was in previous versions of OS X, but if you have a penchant for order, FolderOrg (🔍🔍🔍) may be for you: when you drop items into a folder, this Folder Action automatically places them into dated subfolders—the items added to a folder on a certain date are filed in a subfolder that has that date as its name (free; [homepage.mac.com/doug\\_everly](http://homepage.mac.com/doug_everly)).



### LOG AND FILE WATCHER

#### GeekTool 2.1

GeekTool (🔍🔍🔍) lets you keep an eye on a log file, the output of a command in Terminal, or a changing Internet image, via a configurable display that sits on your desktop or floats above all other windows. The display updates in real time so you can always see, for example, a log's most-recent entries. You can configure multiple displays and create multiple groups of displays that you can switch between using a menu-bar item (free; [projects.tynsoe.org](http://projects.tynsoe.org)).

### WEB IMAGE TOOL

#### ImageWell 2.0.224

If you spend a lot of time preparing photos for the Web, ImageWell (🔍🔍🔍) can help streamline the process. Drag an image into the "well" to begin using the app's numerous editing features (crop; shape; rotate; resize; watermark; and add borders, drop shadows, labels, and text). Then click on the Send button; ImageWell will create the new image (in the format you choose) and upload it to your iDisk, FTP site, or Web-DAV server. ImageWell even gives you an estimation of how long it will take a modem user to download the image—so you can adjust the size if necessary—and copies the URL of the image to the Clipboard after uploading. ImageWell won't replace Adobe Photoshop, or even Lemke Software's Graphic-Converter, for more-demanding image editing, but it's a great tool for

# { UPDATED REVIEWS }

Most of the Mac gems I review are updated frequently with new features and bug fixes. So here are new reviews of 10 popular apps.

### SCRIPT-MENU UTILITY

#### FastScripts 2.2.3

OS X's Script menu is a great place to quickly access AppleScripts and shell scripts, but replacing it with FastScripts (🔍🔍🔍) gives you even more functionality. The biggest advantage is easier creation of keyboard shortcuts—even application-

specific ones—for scripts. But FastScripts also offers better performance, quick access to both user and systemwide scripts folders, on-screen script-feedback messages, and better menu organization. It now lets you run Automator workflows without having to launch Automator (\$15; [www.red-sweater.com](http://www.red-sweater.com)).

### FILE INFORMATION EDITOR

#### FileXaminer 2.4.2

Among the myriad utilities that help you edit file information and permissions, FileXaminer (🔍🔍🔍) has always stood out, and the latest version is even better. In addition to an easy-to-use interface for editing file permissions and attributes (including advanced attributes such as sticky bits), this utility provides Super Delete and Force Empty Trash functions—accessible from the Dock, Finder contextual menus, or the application itself—for getting rid of stubborn files. It also has a batch mode (for working with multiple



**Pretty Picture** Speed up your Web-image upload process with ImageWell's simple tools.

the casual image editing and uploading that most people do (free; [www.xtralean.com](http://www.xtralean.com)).

## DRAWING PROGRAM

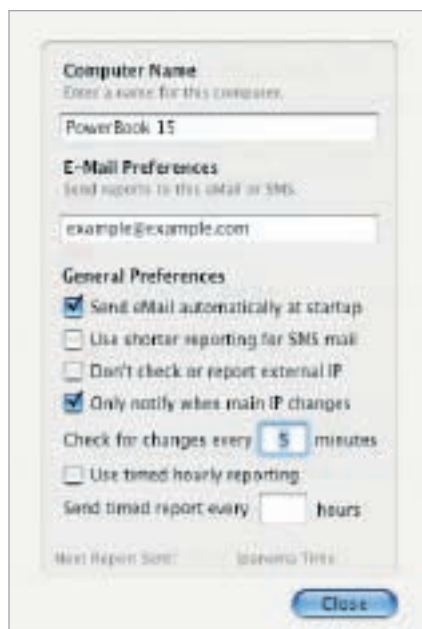
### Intaglio 2.3.2

Looking for a powerful drawing application but don't want to spend big bucks for Adobe Illustrator CS2? Then you're going to love Intaglio (★★★★). Although it isn't as rich in features as the \$499 Illustrator, Intaglio has all the drawing and graphics tools that most people need. The program also takes advantage of many OS X features, via a Spotlight importer; Automator actions; and support for AppleScript, Apple Type Services, and Quartz graphics tools. The ability to convert PDF, QuickDraw, and ClarisDraw files, and to import from and export to Apple's Pages and Key-note programs, is also sure to please. At \$89, Intaglio isn't as inexpensive as most Mac gems, but compared with Illustrator, it's a bargain (\$89; [www.purgatorydesign.com](http://www.purgatorydesign.com)).

## IP-ADDRESS E-MAILER

### Ipanema 1.4

To connect remotely to your computer—for accessing files or performing administrative tasks—you need to know its IP address. If you have a dynamic IP address (the case with most DSL, cable, and modem connections), this can be a difficult task. Ipanema (★★★★) provides welcome assistance by e-mailing—via OS X's Mail app—your IP address to you. You can tell Ipanema to alert you when your IP address changes, at periodic intervals, or both. The e-mail message lists both external and internal IP addresses, including the IP addresses for each active network port, such as Ethernet, AirPort, and modem (free; [www.ifthensoft.com](http://www.ifthensoft.com)).



**IP Addresser** If you need to know your computer's current IP address when you're away from home, Ipanema can e-mail you when anything changes.

## TRACKPAD SCROLLING UTILITY

### iScroll2 0.25e

Apple's latest PowerBooks let you scroll through windows by dragging two fingers across the trackpad. iScroll2 (★★★★) brings similar functionality to iBooks and many older PowerBooks. With this replacement trackpad driver, you can scroll by dragging two fingers up, down, left, right, or in a circular motion (as with an iPod Click Wheel). You can customize trackpad sensitivity and scrolling speed, and you can assign different mouse-button behaviors to the trackpad button and to finger taps (free; [macworld.com/0632](http://macworld.com/0632)).

## SHUTDOWN TIMER

### iWillQuit 1.2

You can set your Mac to shut down or go to sleep at a specific time on certain days, but what if you just want it to shut down after you've finished downloading the lat-



**Countdown to Shutdown** iWillQuit is a simple timer that tells your Mac when to shut down, restart, go to sleep, or log out.



**File Master** Edit file permissions and attributes, get rid of stubborn files, and edit text files as the root user with FileXaminer.

files at one time), Finder integration, and systemwide support

for contextual menus. Other features let you resize and convert images, edit icons, and edit text files as the root user. File-

Xaminer even lets you create and delete user groups without having to delve into Apple's NetInfo Manager application (\$10; [www.gideonsoftworks.com](http://www.gideonsoftworks.com)).

## MOVIE MANAGER

### Netflix Freak 2.1.3

If you're a customer of Netflix, an online DVD-rental service, avoid the company's Web site and use Netflix Freak (★★★★) instead. In addition to a *much* better interface for managing your movie queue, it offers improved searching and browsing of Netflix's library to help you find the perfect movie. You can also



**Action!** Netflix Freak gives you total control over your Netflix account, via a much better interface than the Netflix Web site provides.



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est Mac OS X update? iWillQuit (★★★★) lets you tell your Mac to go to sleep, restart, shut down, or log out after a specified amount of time, and only then. Of course, as with any logout or shutdown, you need to make sure that you don't have unsaved changes in any open documents. Keep that in mind, and iWillQuit works very well (free; [macworld.com/0633](http://macworld.com/0633)).

### KEYBOARD VIEWER LAUNCHER

#### KeyViewer 1.4

OS X's Keyboard Viewer (known as Key Caps in OS 9 and early versions of OS X) is a handy utility for finding the key combinations of seldom-used symbols and characters. But to enable it, you need to go to the International preference pane and turn on the Input menu—a hassle, as well as a waste of menu-bar space if you don't use any other features of the Input menu. KeyViewer (★★★★) is a simple AppleScript that opens Keyboard Viewer; just stick KeyViewer in the Dock or on your desktop—or launch it with a keyboard macro utility—for quick access to Keyboard Viewer (free; [www.macparc.ch](http://www.macparc.ch)).

### UNIX `man` PAGE VIEWER

#### ManOpen 2.5

Most Terminal commands have corresponding manual (`man`) pages that explain how to use them. But Terminal's plain-text-only display doesn't make it easy to read these (often long) pages. ManOpen (★★★★) lets you view them in a customizable, user-friendly window. A pop-up menu takes you directly to the various sections of each `man` page; references to other commands appear as live links you can click on to view the `man` pages for those commands; and you can even do *apropos* keyword searches. ManOpen also adds a Terminal command (`openman`) that

quickly search your own queue and see your entire rental history. You can categorize rentals by who rented them—useful for keeping the peace at home—as well as by your own genres, and you can add your own notes to movie records. Netflix Freak now supports Netflix Profiles and multiple Netflix accounts (\$15; [www.thelittleappfactory.com](http://www.thelittleappfactory.com)).

### RSS READER

#### NetNewsWire Lite 2.0

Safari 2.0's RSS-reading features are nice, but if you're serious about news feeds, you need a dedicated RSS reader. The \$25 Net-



opens `man` pages in ManOpen directly from

Terminal (free; [www.clindberg.org](http://www.clindberg.org)).

### ENVELOPE AND LABEL DESIGNER

#### Mail Factory 2.0.3

Do you wish Address Book had better features for printing envelopes and labels? Mail Factory (★★★★) lets you create custom label and envelope layouts—by dragging address elements, images, and more onto your chosen label or envelope size—and then print them with the addresses of contacts in Address Book, Entourage, Eudora, or many other contact databases. You can use the included templates for pretty much any label or envelope printer, or let Mail Factory walk you through the process of creating your own format and style (\$40; [www.belightsoft.com](http://www.belightsoft.com)).

### CONVERSION TOOL

#### Measure 1.0

Put simply, Measure (★★★★) is a conversion calculator with a built-in reference data-

base of important and interesting information. But that description doesn't do it justice. This incredibly powerful program uses both mathematical- and text-based equations to calculate and convert measurements. For example, to find the distance between Chicago and Detroit, you would type `map location of Chicago`, press enter, type `map location of Detroit`, press enter, and then click on the subtract button (-). Measure's biggest drawback is that because it can do so many things, it can be a bit confusing to use (\$39; [www.unitsoftware.com](http://www.unitsoftware.com)).

### RAM TESTER

#### Memtest 4.1

One of the most difficult hardware issues to diagnose is defective RAM, which can result in symptoms ranging from random application crashes to systemwide freezes. Even Apple's Hardware Test won't catch every chip problem. Memtest (★★★★), on the other hand, is as close to foolproof as anything you'll find. This command-line utility works in Terminal but is more effectively run in single-user mode at startup (as explained in its user guide). It checks your RAM, bit by bit, for problems—and repeats its tests as many times as you specify (free; [www.memtestosx.org](http://www.memtestosx.org)).

### ISIGHT CAPTURE APP

#### MulleSight 1.0.9

Apple's iSight makes a great video-chat camera, but when you're *not* participating in a video chat, your iSight just sits there. MulleSight (★★★★) lets you use your iSight to take snapshots, which it then sends to the Clipboard for pasting into any application that supports images. MulleSight also provides access to advanced camera and compression settings, and because it supports AppleScript, scripts and other applications

NewsWire is my favorite, but NetNewsWire Lite (★★★★) offers many of its features for free. It organizes your RSS feeds in a three-paneled interface. New articles are highlighted, as well as included in the app's Dock menu; choose a title to view the article in the main window. If you have NetNewsWire Lite installed on multiple Macs, you can share RSS subscriptions among them (free; [www.ranchero.com](http://www.ranchero.com)).

### BROWSER-BASED PDF VIEWER

#### PDF Browser Plugin 2.2.2

Tiger's Safari 2.0 provides basic PDF-viewing features, and the latest version

of Adobe Reader includes a PDF plug-in for most Web browsers—but if you do a lot of PDF viewing, get PDF Browser Plugin (★★★★). It not only lets you view online PDFs directly in your browser, but also provides multiple layout options; a split view (for viewing different parts of a PDF simultaneously); and support for annotation, forms, tables of contents, and links. You can access options and control viewing via toolbar menus and keyboard commands, and you get additional printing options not available without the plug-in. You can also send PDFs to other applications or save them to



**You're So Vain** With MülleSight, you can easily grab snapshots from your iSight camera for use in picture-ready applications.

can access your iSight through MülleSight to capture images or video (free; [www.mulle-kybernetik.com](http://www.mulle-kybernetik.com)).

## IMAGING ASSISTANT

### NetRestore 3.0.3

If you're a network administrator who supports large numbers of Macs, you'll love NetRestore (★★★★) for its ability to restore a master disk image to target Macs locally, over a local network, or over the Internet. You can even use Apple's NetBoot system to deploy a disk image to an entire lab full of Macs. NetRestore can customize each Mac after the restoration by providing network settings, a computer name, and even an Open Firmware password. A helper app assists you in creating a master image (free; [www.bombich.com](http://www.bombich.com)).

## NFS SHARE MANAGER

### NFS Manager 2.8

OS X's Sharing preference pane lets you enable personal file sharing and Windows file sharing, but it doesn't give you a way to enable Network File System (NFS) shares—a popular protocol, supported by OS X, for sharing files between Unix computers. NFS Manager (★★★★) provides a convenient graphical user interface for both accessing NFS shares on other com-

puters and configuring NFS shares on your own Macs. NFS Manager even works with NetInfo and LDAP directories to allow you to configure multiple computers simultaneously (€15 [about \$18 at press time]; [www.bresink.de/osx](http://www.bresink.de/osx)).

## COLOR PICKER

### Painter's Picker 2.0.6

OS X's built-in Colors palette is quite

(which is added to Safari's menu bar when you install Concierge); you can open saved bookmarks in Safari in the same ways. Concierge's Smart Folders show bookmarks and history items relating to any site you choose. Concierge also lets you view your bookmarks without obscuring the current Safari window. You can even add notes to bookmarks and sort your History list by domain, date, or both (\$10; [www.bti.net](http://www.bti.net)).

## iSwiff 1.1

Have you ever wished you could download those Flash games and movies you find on the Web, so you could play them later? iSwiff (★★★★) lets you do just that, provided you've already installed Macromedia's Flash browser plug-in. Just drag the downloaded Flash file onto iSwiff to play it. (You can use File Juicer [see page 50] to extract .swf files from Windows .exe archives.) The developer's Web site even provides a number of useful links to Flash games on the Web (free; [www.echoone.com](http://www.echoone.com)).

good, but Painter's Picker (★★★★) provides more-advanced color picking for people in creative fields. It includes detailed controls for choosing brightness, saturation, and hue angles; the ability to quickly find complementary or analogous colors; RGB, CMYK, and Web-safe spaces; and much more. And the best thing about Painter's Picker is that, as a plug-in that adds an addi-



**A Better PDF** PDF Browser Plugin bests Safari's PDF-viewing capabilities, and it costs the same amount—nothing.

disk (home, education, or noncommercial use, free; commercial site license, \$69; [www.schubert-it.com](http://www.schubert-it.com)).

## FINDER-WINDOW PRINTER

### Print Window 3.1.3

OS X lacks the ability to print a Finder window's contents. Print Window (★★★★) adds this ability and a lot more. You can print the contents of any Finder window via drag and drop, by pressing a keyboard shortcut, through the Services menu, or by selecting the window from within Print Window. You get the added bonus of choosing what to print: complete file and

folder information or just names, the visible contents of a folder or all subfolders, and icons or no icons. You can even include custom headers, sort listings, and choose the printing font. The new Advanced version adds the ability to print formatted CD and DVD covers, selectively print subfolders, and customize information display (free; Advanced version, \$15; [www.searchwaresolutions.com](http://www.searchwaresolutions.com)).

## COLLABORATION TOOL

### SubEthaEdit 2.1.2

Letting several people simultaneously make changes to a document has tradi-

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tional panel to OS X's Colors palette, it's available systemwide (\$16; [www.oldjewelsoftware.com](http://www.oldjewelsoftware.com)).

### SCIENCE PROGRAM Physics 101 SE 4.1

For physics teachers and students, Physics 101 SE (🔧🔧🔧🔧) is a great tool for figuring out the results of physics formulas and understanding how those results were calculated. The 80-plus formulas are organized by topic (work, momentum, thermodynamics, electricity, optics, and so on) and let you type

in known values to solve for an unknown. And when you click on the question-mark button next to a formula, Physics 101 SE will provide an explanation of the formula and display the calculation that was performed. The application also includes special

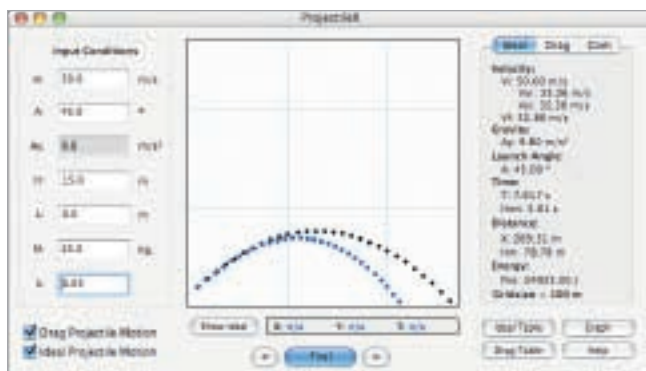
modes for simulating projectiles, building virtual circuits, and more (\$10; [www.praetersoftware.com](http://www.praetersoftware.com)).

### APPLICATION MAKER Platypus 3.1

If you can write a shell script but have no clue how to create an OS X application, Platypus (🔧🔧🔧) is for you. It lets you create an app based on a shell script (or other script, such as Perl, Python, PHP, Ruby, Expect, Tcl, or AppleScript)—you get the functionality of the script in the user-friendly environment of a graphical application. The resulting application will even support drag and drop—when you drag a file onto the app, the file's path is passed to the underlying shell script as an argument. You can also add features such as progress bars and text-input windows (free; [macworld.com/0692](http://macworld.com/0692)).

### INTERNET-STREAM RECORDER RadioLover 1.4

RadioLover (🔧🔧🔧)—a descendant of the popular StreamRipperX—lets you record MP3-based Internet radio (both streams listed in iTunes and those you enter manually) and adds the resulting record-



**Science Lab** Physics 101 SE makes understanding complex science a bit easier.

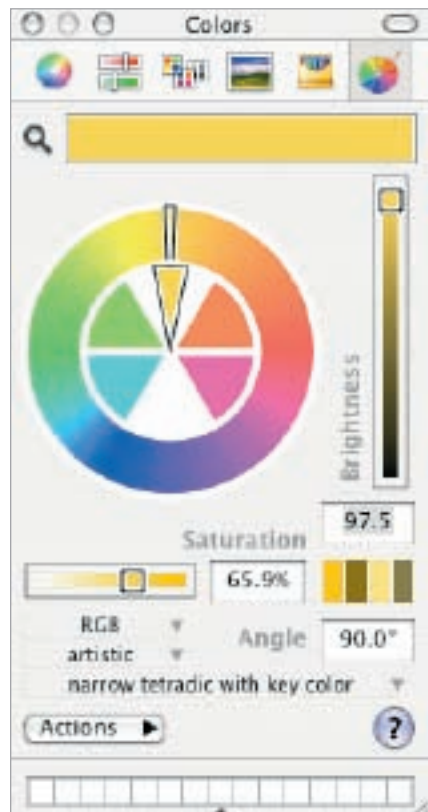
ings to iTunes. You can record multiple streams simultaneously, schedule recordings, and opt to automatically split recordings at set intervals. RadioLover can even split recordings that include track information into individual tracks and then tag them for you (\$15; [www.bitcartel.com](http://www.bitcartel.com)).

### ON-SCREEN NOTE APP Sidenote 1.7

Do you like Stickies but want something a bit less conspicuous? Sidenote (🔧🔧🔧) hides a notepad that supports rich text, images, and PDFs on the edge of your screen—the notepad appears when you move the cursor to the screen edge, and it slides off the screen when not in use. You can create multiple notes and use the keyboard or a pop-up menu to switch between them. You can even drag content from the Finder or another application to Sidenote; the Sidenote notepad slides out to accept the content (free; [www.chatelp.org](http://www.chatelp.org)).

### SCREENSHOT CREATOR SnapNDrag 1.6.1

If you don't need the power and features of Snapz Pro X but find that OS X's Grab



**Color Master** Painter's Picker makes short work of advanced color picking in OS X.

tionally been a recipe for disaster. SubEthaEdit (🔧🔧🔧🔧) makes such collaborative efforts feasible—even enjoyable—by allowing an unlimited number of participants to join an editing session over the Internet or via Apple's Bonjour (formerly Rendezvous). Each person's contributions are tracked in a different color, and each participant can see what other participants are doing in the document. Integration with Apple's iChat and Mail means that you can chat with or e-mail participants on the side. SubEthaEdit is also a full-fledged text editor, with powerful formatting and

search-and-replace functions, and it provides automatic syntax highlighting via customizable styles. You can even export your documents to HTML, complete with author metadata. A Unix command-line tool lets SubEthaEdit interact with Terminal (noncommercial use, free; commercial use, \$35; [www.codingmonkeys.de](http://www.codingmonkeys.de)).

### ITUNES CONTROLLER Synergy 2.0.1

There are many iTunes controllers and information displays out there, but none works as well as Synergy (🔧🔧🔧🔧). It pro-

vides systemwide hot keys for playback and volume control; a snazzy, translucent informational display (track, artist, album cover, and so on) that fades in and out at the start of each track (or at your command); and optional playback controls—which you can customize with downloadable button sets—in the menu bar. (The playback controls also provide a menu that lists playlists and recent tracks.) The latest version of Synergy features support for Growl (a global notification system for OS X), as well as the ability to launch AppleScripts or other items on track or status



utility is too limiting, SnapNDrag (★★★★) may be the screenshot utility for you. Click on a button representing the type of shot you want to take—screen, window, selection, or timed—and then choose the desired screen, window, or part of the screen. A small preview of the shot appears; you can then save the shot, drag it to the desktop, or drag it directly to an e-mail message or another application. The Pro version adds hot keys and image scaling (free; Pro version, \$5; [www.yellowmug.com](http://www.yellowmug.com)).

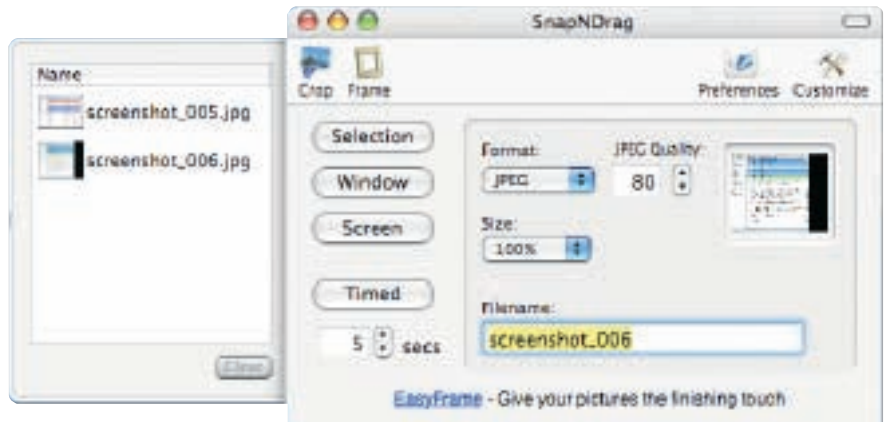
## SHORTCUT MANAGER

### Spark 2.0.1

OS X lets you assign keyboard shortcuts to menu items, but Spark (★★★★) lets you do much more, such as create hot-key shortcuts that run AppleScripts, launch applications, open documents, control iTunes, and execute system actions (log out, sleep, restart, and shut-down). You can also make the shortcuts conditional (do different things depending on the application). The program allows you to import and export its shortcut libraries—great for using the same shortcuts on different computers. And Spark can make an HTML cheat sheet of your hot keys for you (free; [macworld](http://macworld.com)



**Cut It Short** With Spark, you can make hot-key shortcuts for launching apps, opening documents, controlling iTunes, and more.



**Screen Capturer** SnapNDrag makes taking screenshots easy, and it does more than OS X's Grab application.

[.com/0693](http://.com/0693)).

## ITUNES SYNC HELPER

### syncOtunes 0.95

If you've got multiple Macs, chances are your iTunes Libraries are out of sync. They don't have to be. With syncOtunes (★★★★), you select your current Mac's iTunes Music Library.xml file, connect to another Mac through personal file sharing (which you can enable in the System Preferences Sharing preference pane), and then select that Mac's Library file. syncOtunes will list missing files from each Library, and it will then let you decide whether to copy the missing files in both directions. Unfortunately, you then need to import the new tracks into iTunes on each Mac—syncOtunes has some useful features that make the process easier, but it would be nice if the

program performed this step automatically (free; [homepage.mac.com/oligrob](http://homepage.mac.com/oligrob)).

## SOFTWARE KVM SWITCH

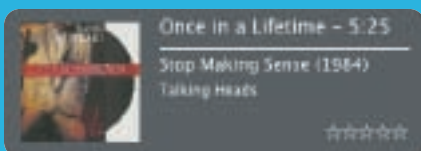
### teleport PR3

With teleport (★★★★), you can use one keyboard and one mouse to control multiple Macs on a local network. However, instead of a hardware KVM (keyboard, video, mouse) switch, teleport uses a clever bit of software engineering that works much like screen spanning. You install and activate teleport on each Mac; then you arrange the virtual displays on the master computer. When you move the mouse cursor off the edge of one screen, it moves onto one of the others—you can then use your mouse and keyboard as if they were connected to that computer (free; [www.abyssoft.com](http://www.abyssoft.com)).

## BREAK REMINDER

### Time Out 1.3

Do you spend too much time in front of your Mac? Do you forget to take breaks? Time Out (★★★★) reminds you at regular intervals, to, well, take some time out from your computing. Or more accurately, it *forces* you to do so by dimming your screen



**Take Control** With Synergy, you don't need to switch to iTunes to change tracks.

changes (€5 [about \$6 at press time]; [wincent.com](http://wincent.com)).

## WINDOW MODIFIER

### WindowShade X 3.6

WindowShade X (★★★★) brings OS 9's

popular Window Shade effect to OS X. Double-click on a window's title bar, and depending on your preference, the window rolls up and out of the way, becomes transparent, minimizes in place instead of to the Dock, or hides completely. You can also assign actions to different types of clicks (such as control-double-click). As a bonus, you can customize window shadow settings (\$10; [www.unsanity.com](http://www.unsanity.com)).

## USER-SWITCHING UTILITY

### WinSwitch 3.1

With Tiger, Apple finally lets you display the Fast User Switching menu as

a short user name or a user icon, so it doesn't take up so much space. But WinSwitch (★★★★)—one of my favorite Panther utilities for this feature—is still quite useful. In addition to letting you display a user's initials in the menu bar, customize the appearance of menu contents, and assign a keyboard shortcut to switch to the Login window, WinSwitch can automatically launch applications or open documents when you switch to or from certain accounts. It can even list the root user—if enabled—in the Fast User Switching menu (free; [wincent.com](http://wincent.com)).



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for the duration of the break. (You can postpone or skip a break if you're in the middle of an important thought.) And if you remember to take a break on your own—or just go to get a cup of coffee—Time Out counts that as a break (free; [www.dejal.com](http://www.dejal.com)).

### TRANSCRIPTION AID

#### Transcriba 1.0.3

If you've been struggling with transcribing content from a digital audio recorder, then Transcriba (★★★★) can help (although you still have to do the transcription work yourself). With its QuickTime support for many audio formats, mouse- or keyboard-controlled playback, and variable playback speeds, you can easily listen to your recordings as you transcribe. Even better, the program's chat-like interface, with automatic time coding and support for multiple speakers, makes keeping track of conversations and interviews easy. There's even a follow-along mode for checking your transcriptions—the text scrolls in time with the audio file (\$20; [www.bartastechnologies.com](http://www.bartastechnologies.com)).

### DESKTOP PICTURE FRAME

#### VirtuFrame 2.7

Desks used to hold picture frames where computers sit today. But if you've got some spare room on your Mac's desktop, you can add a virtual picture frame that rotates through your favorite images. Just point VirtuFrame (★★★★) at a folder of pictures (your iPhoto Library folder, for example), choose the frame size and style, and specify the rotation period. VirtuFrame then displays your images as though they were in a real frame (well, a real frame that changes photos automatically). You can also choose to keep VirtuFrame floating on top of all other windows, so you never miss a picture (free; [www.trilateral.com](http://www.trilateral.com)).

### DISK BROWSER



**Take a Breather** Time Out encourages you to get up from your Mac at regular intervals and stretch.

## { THREE COOL MENU-BAR ITEMS }

#### Ardiem 1.1.1

If you have an external FireWire optical drive, Ardiem (★★★★) lets you not only open its tray and eject a disc via a menu-bar icon (much as OS X's menu extra does), but also assign a different keyboard shortcut to each internal and external drive you have (free; [www.chaoticminds.org](http://www.chaoticminds.org)).

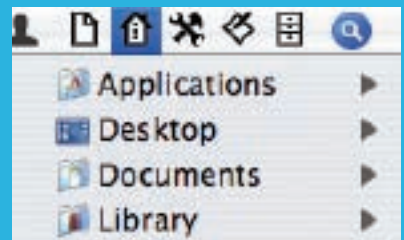
#### iTunesRating 1.0.2

For an easier way to rate your iTunes tracks and view existing ratings, iTunesRating (★★★★) puts an iTunes ratings bar in the menu bar. You just click on a star to set or change the current track's iTunes rating. The app also lets you change its star icons to your own images (free; [macworld.com/0631](http://macworld.com/0631)).

#### XMenu 1.7

XMenu (★★★★) lets you add hierarchical menus similar to OS 9's Apple menu to

OS X's menu bar—for the Applications and Developer folders; your Home folder; your Documents folder; and the XMenu folder, the contents of which you can customize. You can choose to display the menus to the right or left of Apple's menu items, and there are other sorting and display options. Choosing an item from one of XMenu's menus opens it, or you can use modifier keys to perform one of several actions on the item (free; [www.devon-technologies.com](http://www.devon-technologies.com)).



**The Apple Menu Returns** Add hierarchical menus to OS X's menu bar with XMenu.

### Volumes Menu 1.0

Volumes Menu (★★★★) lets you quickly browse mounted volumes via a hierarchical menu in the menu bar. The app is a spin-off of Butler (a file launcher, bookmark manager, Web-search utility, pasteboard extension, and more) and includes some of Butler's volume-browsing functions (free; [macworld.com/0645](http://macworld.com/0645)).

### FINDER UPDATER

#### WindowsUpdater 1.1

If you've ever made a change to a folder—especially on a server—and then sat there waiting for the Finder to update the folder's contents, WindowsUpdater (★★★★) is for you. Click on the Update Windows button to immediately update all Finder windows, including your desktop. Or set WindowsUpdater to periodically refresh all windows automatically (free; [www.choosefile.com](http://www.choosefile.com)).

### ENABLER

#### WinShortcutter 1.2

OS X works well on Windows networks, but it still has trouble with Windows *shortcuts* (the Windows version of OS X aliases)—double-clicking on a shortcut file on a Windows file server doesn't work. WinShortcutter (★★★★) fixes this problem, giving you easy access to Windows shortcuts. If the shortcut's target resides on a different server, WinShortcutter mounts that server, using your choice of SMB or AFP. WinShortcutter can even create an OS X alias next to the shortcut file, so other Mac users on your network won't have the same problem (free; [www.lobotomo.com](http://www.lobotomo.com)).

### SYSTEM LOG TOOL

#### X-Statistics 1.2

Few people can make sense out of OS X's various system log files. But even those who can are sure to find X-Statistics (★★★★) useful. It examines the log files and then presents you with a graphical timeline of major system events—when the computer was

### WINDOWS SHORTCUT

Senior Writer DAN FRANKS is *Macworld's* Mac Gems columnist and the reviews editor of Playlistmag.com.

# Mac Gems

Photos are personal things—pictures of vacations, friends, family, or even the treasures we’ve decided to sell on eBay. But for people who make a living off of their photographs, use them for business purposes, or just want to make sure that other people don’t appropriate them for nefarious purposes, making photographs available electronically requires taking some precautions.

Watermarking is a process by which you superimpose an identifying mark—a copyright notice, a business logo, a signature, or some text—onto an image, so its ownership is obvious. Although there are a number of ways to add watermarks to your digital images, I haven’t seen a better solution than Script Software’s \$20 **iWatermark 2.0.3** (★★★★; [www.scriptsoftware.com](http://www.scriptsoftware.com)). iWatermark’s beauty is in its ease of use and its functionality. To apply watermarks to images, you simply drag a folder of images that you want to watermark (the Input folder) and another folder where you want to save the newly watermarked images (the Output folder) to the corresponding panels in the iWatermark window, and then click on the Process button. iWatermark leaves the original files untouched and creates new images complete with the watermark of your choice. (The new files retain EXIF and IPTC tags—a nice touch.) The process is fairly quick—for me, each image took less than a second.

Your watermark can be any image you want. Just drag it into the Image well, and you’re done. But you don’t have to stick with a standard image overlay; you can use text instead, or text and an image together. And you can completely customize the appearance of the watermark elements—location, justification, rotation, size, effect (emboss, outline, and engraved are a few

options), transparency, and text font and style. A live preview shows what the resulting watermarked images will look like. You even get to choose the output format for watermarked images: support for JPEG, TIFF, PNG, PICT, and BMP is built in, and iWatermark can use QuickTime to save images in Photo-

shop format. themselves—you just provide the appropriate dimensions. You can also resample images to a higher or lower resolution. Finally, iWatermark lets you create watermark sets that you can quickly switch between.

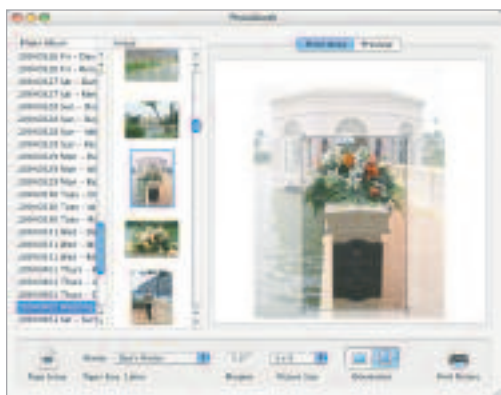
Watermarking used to be something that only professional photographers did, but nowadays everyone should at least consider it. And iWatermark is an inexpensive and impressive utility for the job.

## Picture Printing, Pronto

Speaking of photos, Apple’s iPhoto is a stellar photo-management application. However, its printing functionality makes a big assumption: that you’ve already prepared all your photos for printing—that is, you’ve rotated them, cropped them, resized them, and so on. Assuming the picture is ready to go, you just click on the print button, choose the paper size, and then print. But what if you haven’t done all that preparation? Or what if you want to print a cropped version of a photo but leave the original intact? (iPhoto always keeps an unaltered copy, but you have to remember to use the Revert To Original command to get it back.) Sometimes I just want to quickly print a new photo that I downloaded from my digital camera without worrying about “managing” it first.

Just as iWatermark lets you easily add watermarks to your photos, Stunt Software’s \$20 **PhotoBooth 1.2** (★★★★; [www.stuntsoftware.com](http://www.stuntsoftware.com)) makes printing photos quick and easy. When you launch PhotoBooth, you’ll see all your iPhoto albums in a list on the left. Choose the photo you want to print by selecting the appropriate album (or your iPhoto library itself) and then the image—it will appear in the main viewer pane. (You can also choose images that aren’t in iPhoto.) Now it’s time to work your quick-print magic: Select a margin width, picture size, and orientation. You’ll see the appropriate crop outline in the main viewer pane. Just as you would in iPhoto, you can move the crop outline to choose the desired section of the photo—but unlike with iPhoto, you can actually resize the crop as needed (it will keep the correct aspect ratio for your chosen picture size). Click on the Print Picture button, and the selected section of the photo prints at the desired image size. It’s

continues



## Prompt Prints

PhotoBooth makes fast work of printing your photos.

iWatermark also has useful features for preparing images for a Web site. It can generate corresponding thumbnail images in whatever format and size you choose, and it can resize the watermarked images

that simple. A handy Preview window shows what your final printout will look like, depending on the chosen paper size and the printer you’re printing to—a nice feature that’s more helpful than you might think.

I’m sure there are some readers who are thinking, “I just don’t get it—printing in iPhoto isn’t that hard.” You’re right, it isn’t. But printing in PhotoBooth is even easier. It takes printing only a few photos with PhotoBooth to appreciate its usefulness. It’s a great utility that does exactly the job it’s intended to do—and it does the job well.

iSight Settings

Even though Apple’s iSight camera is widely considered one of the best videoconferencing cameras on the market, a common criticism is its lack of user controls for adjusting picture quality—you’re stuck with the iSight’s standard autofocus and auto-exposure functionality. Although these features usually produce a good picture, many users would like to be able to adjust the iSight’s focus, brightness, or color balance to improve the video they transmit to their iChat buddies.

Interestingly, this limitation has nothing to do with the iSight itself—Apple just hasn’t provided a software interface for the iSight’s built-in capabilities. But there are several third-party products that do just that; my current favorite is Ecamm Networks’ \$8 **iGlasses 1.1** (★★★★; [www.ecamm.com](http://www.ecamm.com)).

After you install iGlasses, you get a new iGlasses Settings item in iChat’s Video menu. Clicking on that item brings up a window with a number of iSight presets such as Sepia, Night Vision, and Macro Focus. Or you can customize a number of attributes—brightness, edge enhancement, exposure level, focus, gain, hue, saturation, shutter, temperature, and white balance—and save your settings to a new custom preset.

As a bonus, iGlasses allows you to use an iSight camera with iChat on Power Mac G3s that have processors slower than 600MHz—computers that are not officially supported by Apple for use with the iSight.

iGlasses won’t turn your iSight into a studio-quality video camera, but it will significantly improve

image quality. Now I just wish that I could get the people on the other end of my video chats to use it, too—sometimes they don’t look so hot.

Mighty Mini Mouse, Part II

Back in September, I talked about the RadTech BT-500 Mobile Mouse (★★★★), an excellent wireless mouse for Bluetooth-equipped PowerBooks and iBooks. That review generated a number of requests for a similar recommendation for Bluetooth-less laptops. I suggest BenQ’s slick \$40 **M310 Optical Wireless Mouse** (★★★★; [www.benq.com](http://www.benq.com)).

Like the BT-500, the M310 is an 800-dpi optical mouse featuring left and right buttons and a clickable scroll wheel, all of which are supported by OS X right out of the box. However, it gets its wireless functionality via an included RF (radio frequency) hardware receiver that plugs into any USB port. What sets the M310 apart from many other RF mice is that its USB receiver is stored inside the mouse itself. When you want to use the mouse, you press a button to make the receiver pop out (an action that also turns the mouse on). When you’re done, you unplug the receiver from your computer and then slide it back into the slot on the mouse; this turns the mouse off. The M310’s receiver is convenient and nearly impossible to lose during transit or storage.

BenQ claims that the M310 will run for more than three months on two AAA batteries under normal usage. I haven’t yet reached the three-month mark, so I can’t tell you how accurate that estimate is (or what “normal usage” means), but my batteries are still going strong after two months. To preserve battery power, the M310 sleeps after approximately 30 seconds of inactivity—it wakes up when you move the mouse—and turns off completely after 5 minutes of inactivity. A click of any button turns the mouse back on again, although it takes a few seconds before the cursor is responsive.

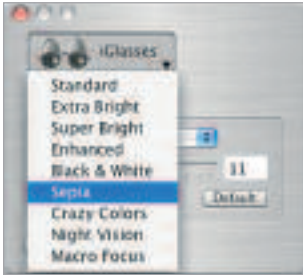
For people who are concerned about size, the M310 (unlike many RF mice) strikes a good compromise between portability and usability. It’s 3.5 inches long, it’s covered in hard rubber for a good grip, and it weighs less than 3 ounces.

Although I still like the BT-500 for Bluetooth-enabled laptops, the M310 has become my personal favorite for non-Bluetooth models. My iBook never goes anywhere without it. □

**Gadget Points** You can store the M310’s infrared receiver inside its body for safekeeping.



**iTouch-up** With iGlasses, your iSight video looks better than ever.



GO TO WEBLOG:			
The Mac Gems Weblog ( <a href="http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/">www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/</a> ) has longer versions of the reviews you see here, as well as reviews not in this column. Check out this month’s Web exclusives.			
PRODUCT	RATING	URL	DESCRIPTION
Endicia	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0196">find.macworld.com/0196</a>	mailing and postage program
Fob	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0196">find.macworld.com/0196</a>	timer
SideTrack	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0196">find.macworld.com/0196</a>	replacement trackpad driver

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# Mac Gems

In August 2004, I introduced you to Carsten Blüm's Plain Clip (★★★★; [www.bluem.net](http://www.bluem.net)), a useful little app that strips text of all formatting so you can copy formatted text and then paste it as plain text. Reader response to that recommendation was very positive—it's clear that some people spend a lot of time cleaning up text.

Unfortunately, styled text is often the least of your concerns; a bigger issue is messy text—text copied from an e-mail, a Web site, or a PDF, and littered with odd characters, hard returns, unnecessary spaces, and who knows what else. If this sounds familiar, you need to check out unmarked software's \$25 **textSoap 4.0.7** (★★★★; [www.unmarked.com](http://www.unmarked.com)).

True to its name, textSoap cleans your text—much faster than you can with your mouse, arrow keys, and delete key. Simply paste your text into the textSoap text window and then select your favorite *cleaner*—a set of rules that tell textSoap exactly what you want done with your text—and your text is ready for pasting. The available cleaners range from the simple to the comprehensive. For example, Spaces replaces multiple contiguous spaces with a single space; Forwarding removes the pesky arrow characters (>) from forwarded e-mail text, and

## Better Battery Monitor

If you're a laptop user, you need to be aware of your battery's status: whether or not it's fully charged, how much time you have left before it runs out of power, and so on. OS X provides a battery-status item for the menu bar—you enable it via the Energy Saver preference pane—but it has two drawbacks. First, it takes up a lot of menu-bar space. Second, it doesn't provide many options. If you have an iBook or a PowerBook, you should check out Colin Henein's free (donations accepted) **SlimBatteryMonitor 1.2** (★★★★; [www.orange-carb.org](http://www.orange-carb.org)).

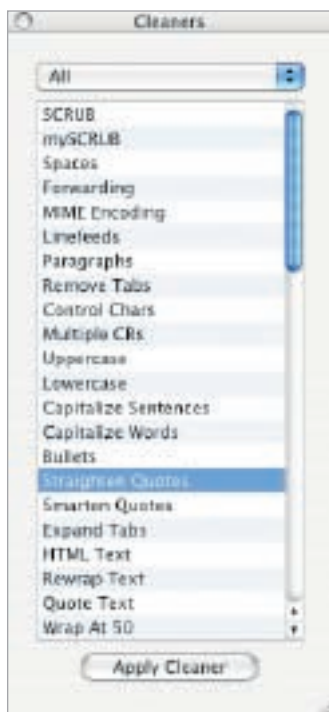
What makes SlimBatteryMonitor better? As its name implies, it's slimmer than OS X's built-in battery-monitor display, giving you more room for other menu-bar items. (It also looks nicer.)

But its customization options are what I like best about SlimBatteryMonitor. Unlike Apple's battery monitor, which shows the same information at all times, SlimBatteryMonitor has three display states—while running on battery, while battery is charging, and when battery is charged. Each state provides different, independent options, so you can get exactly the information you want for each state. (SlimBatteryMonitor uses the same data as Apple's battery monitor, so the gauges are equally accurate.)

I also like SlimBatteryMonitor's custom color settings for providing visual cues as to my PowerBook battery's status: When my laptop is running off the battery, my menu icon is a nice teal; when it's charging, the icon is orange; and when it's fully charged, the icon is bright green. (The latter two colors match the light on my PowerBook's AC adapter.)

A few other extras are also quite useful. Like OS X, SlimBatteryMonitor can show a warning when your battery gets low, but with SlimBatteryMonitor, you decide when that warning appears: with 10, 15, or 25 percent of your battery power remaining. SlimBatteryMonitor also supports dual-battery PowerBooks, and it can even monitor UPS batteries, so it's useful for desktop Macs, too. I wish only that it let you choose your display preferences from its drop-down menu, as OS X's monitor does.

**Copy Cleanser** You have many options for cleaning up messy text with textSoap.



**Power Watcher** Gain some extra menu-bar space—as well as more information—with SlimBatteryMonitor.

cleaners such as Uppercase, Capitalize Words, and Straighten Quotes let you manipulate case and formatting. More-complex cleaners include Scrub—which strips spaces, forwarding arrows, and line feeds; rewraps paragraphs; and converts Hex designations (such as %20 and the similar gunk you often see in e-mail messages) to their ASCII equivalents (turning the aforementioned characters into a space, for example). It's quite pleasing to see a mess of forwarded text instantly transform into nice, neat paragraphs.

All of these cleaners are very useful, but what won me over is the ability to create custom cleaners. And in case having to paste your text into the textSoap window sounds like a hassle, textSoap can also work in other ways: via a contextual menu; through OS X's Services menu; from within supported apps (such as BBEdit, Mailsmith, and Eudora); and using AppleScript.

If you frequently work with messy text, a little textSoap makes cleanup easier.



## Elements, Smell-O-Mints

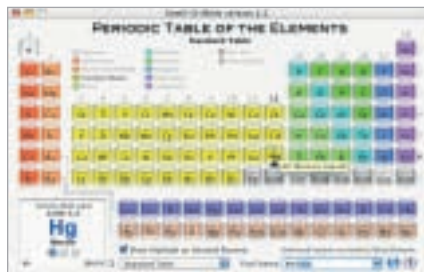
One of my goals with *Mac Gems* is to cover a wide variety of products—I want everyone to eventually discover something useful. I’ve recently received a few requests for more coverage of educational software gems, and I’m happy to oblige. In fact, one of my favorite learning aids has recently received a major update.

I first learned about the periodic table of elements in my sixth-grade science class, and I used it regularly in high-school chemistry. My copy of the periodic table was either a photocopy handed out by the teacher or—if I was lucky—a nifty color-coded version in the back of my chemistry book. But it seems fitting that today’s students have a high-tech version of the periodic table.


John Schilling has obliged by bringing back his free (donations accepted) **Smell-O-Mints 2.1** (★★★★; [www.jschilling.net](http://www.jschilling.net))—an electronic periodic table of the elements—with a major feature update and a pleasing Aqua interface. Like any good periodic table, Smell-O-Mints shows all the known elements in their proper locations, using color to designate elemental types (metals, noble gases, and so on). Click on an element to see more information about it in a detail box in the lower left corner of the screen.

A good high-school chemistry book provides most of this information, but Smell-O-Mints takes advantage of its digital nature with a few unique features. Unlike paper tables, which show each element’s symbol and name, Smell-O-Mints shows only an element’s symbol by default; clicking on the element reveals its name. This makes it a useful study aid. Conversely, if you can’t find a certain element, you can type its name in the Find Element box to highlight it in the table and see its details on screen. And after you find an element, you can click on the globe button next to its name to open that element’s entry in the Wikipedia.org online encyclopedia in your browser. (Another advantage of digital tables is that they can be quickly updated when new elements are discovered or created—there are a few more today than when I was in science class.)

Smell-O-Mints also provides a number of handy specialized views of the periodic table that just aren’t possible with a sheet of paper. In addition to the standard table, it offers color-coded views: Solids, Liquids, and Gases; Metals and Non-Metals; Radioactive Elements; Synthetic/Decay Elements; Crystal Structures (showing which elements are cubic, hexagonal, tetrahedral, and so on); and Block Groups. If you’re a teacher or a student looking for an effective way to study the periodic table, Smell-O-Mints is a great tool.



**It’s Elementary** Chemistry students and teachers alike will enjoy Smell-O-Mints.

 <b>GO TO WEBLOG:</b> The Mac Gems Weblog ( <a href="http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/">www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/</a> ) has longer versions of the reviews you see here, as well as reviews not in this column. Check out this month’s Web exclusives.			
PRODUCT	RATING	URL	DESCRIPTION
IC-Switch	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0240">find.macworld.com/0240</a>	helper-application changer
Outlook2Mac	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0241">find.macworld.com/0241</a>	Outlook mail converter

## Up All Night

There’s an old technology saying—often found adorning T-shirts at computer conferences—that goes something like this: “Macs for productivity, Linux for development, Windows for solitaire.”

Although I might argue with the first two parts, my real beef is with the third: Whoever came up with the slogan had obviously never experienced Semicolon Software’s \$25 **Solitaire Till Dawn X 1.4** (★★★★½; [www.semicolon.com](http://www.semicolon.com)). It’s the best solitaire game I’ve seen on any platform.

From Accordion to Yukon (and every variant of Klondike in between), you get more games and game types than you’ll know what to do with—85 in all. With so many games, how do you decide which one to play? The Game Chooser window shows a list of all games; selecting one from the list displays details about it: its name, the type of game it is (Two-Deck, Thinker’s, Easy to Win, and so on), other names for it, and a short description.

Purists may prefer to play card games without any help; however, for many of us, part of the allure of playing solitaire on a computer can be reduced to a single word: *undo*. Solitaire Till Dawn offers the frustrated solitaire player unlimited undos (and redos), as well as a number of other helpful cheats. At any point, you can take a snapshot of your game; if you get stuck, you can revert to any snapshot and continue playing from that point.

Solitaire Till Dawn does have rather bland graphics. You can customize the game’s background and card designs, but that’s about it—a minor quibble. In fact, the only real problem with Solitaire Till Dawn is this: Although it proves that Windows doesn’t have a lock on solitaire, it also disproves the notion that Macs have a monopoly on productivity. □



**All by Yourself** You may not get much work done after trying Solitaire Till Dawn X—it has 85 games.

Senior Writer DAN FRAKES ([www.danfrakes.com](http://www.danfrakes.com)) is also Playlistmag.com’s reviews editor. Send your thoughts on this column, or on things you’d like to see in future columns, to [macgems@macworld.com](mailto:macgems@macworld.com).

# Mac Gems

On-the-go laptop users frequently find themselves looking for wireless networks to connect to for a quick e-mail check or surfing session. In the December 2004 issue, I reviewed Marware's \$30 WiFi Spy (🔍🔍🔍; [www.marware.com](http://www.marware.com)), my favorite way to check for wireless networks.

My one major criticism was that it didn't differentiate between open and closed networks—you still had to open your laptop and try to connect. Now that Canary Wireless has released its \$50 **Digital Hotspotter** (🔍🔍🔍; [www.canarywireless.com](http://www.canarywireless.com)), my laptop bag has a new Wi-Fi finder. Like the WiFi Spy, the Hotspotter can detect the presence and strength of wireless networks (but, in my tests, with a slightly better range). However, rather than using multiple LED lights to indicate the strength of nearby networks, the Hotspotter includes an LCD that displays textual information about each network, including its SSID (displayed as "cloaked" for private networks); wireless channel number; signal strength; and, perhaps most important, security (that is, whether it requires a password). Road warriors will welcome this final bit of information with open arms, as it lets you keep your PowerBook or iBook in your bag until you've found an open network.

On the other hand, if you have access to a secure network but you've got a case of encryption paranoia, the Hotspotter will tell you whether that network is using WEP or WPA encryption. Even better, the Hotspotter can differentiate between multiple networks: after you press the scan button, the Hotspotter provides detailed information on the strongest network it finds in your vicinity. Pressing the button again displays information on the next-strongest network, and so on.

The Hotspotter does, however, have a few minor flaws. The most obvious is its size: the Hotspotter requires two AA batteries and is a bulky 2.5 by 2.2 by 1.0 inches—more suitable for a laptop bag than for a key chain. I also wish the LCD had a backlight for easier viewing in dimly lit meeting rooms. Finally, the company says that the default settings on a small number of access points prevent the Hotspotter from detecting them even when units such as the WiFi Spy can find them.

That said, in my tests using known access points from various manufacturers, the Hotspotter never failed to detect a network. For now, this Wi-Fi finder is in a league of its own. If you don't mind its bulky size, it will make a great addition to your travel bag.

## Watch It Wiggle

Although some *Mac Gems* picks are full-featured applications, others are simple tools that do simple things that only some people really need to be able to do. Take Stick Software's free **Jiggler 1.2** (🔍🔍🔍; [www.sticksoftware.com](http://www.sticksoftware.com))—all it does is jiggle your mouse cursor periodically to keep your Mac awake. Why would you want to do this? Perhaps you're running SETI@home. Or maybe you've discovered the bug in Final Cut Pro 4 that can result in an application freeze during rendering if you don't move the mouse periodically. Or perhaps you're



**Mouse Shaker** Jiggler keeps your Mac from falling asleep at the wrong times.

engaging in the big no-no of installing an OS X software update on your PowerBook while running off the battery. In each of these cases, Jiggler can keep your Mac from sleeping.

Granted, you could set your Mac to never sleep, in the Energy Saver preference pane, but that isn't necessarily good for your Mac or for energy conservation. And changing your settings just for specific tasks can turn into a hassle.

Simple as it is, Jiggler does provide a few handy options: you can choose how frequently it jiggles your mouse; set the app to jiggle only when you haven't actually been using the mouse; and set particular conditions under which Jiggler should, well, jiggle (when the CPU is busy, when a writable CD or DVD is mounted, or when a particular application is running). Most people won't need Jiggler, but those who do will find it exceptionally useful.

## Port Access

Over the years, one of the most common criticisms of Apple's Power Mac computers has been the lack of front-panel ports and jacks—you have to reach behind (or, if your Power Mac is on the floor, crawl behind) the computer to plug in or unplug acces-

continues



## Extreme Wi-Finder

Sniff out Wi-Fi hotspots with the Digital Hotspotter.

sories such as keyboards, printers, scanners, and speakers. And temporary peripherals—those you connect only when you're actually using them, such as digital cameras, portable hard drives, headphones, and microphones—are even more of a hassle. Apple finally included single FireWire 400, USB, and headphone ports on the front of the Power Mac G5, but the truth is that Windows PCs have had such convenience features for years.

I've finally found an elegant solution to this problem in Marathon Computer's \$59 **RePorter** (★★★★; [www.marathoncomputer.com](http://www.marathoncomputer.com))—put simply, it's an extension cord for your ports. Connect the cables at one end of the RePorter to the ports on the back of your Power Mac, iMac, or eMac. At the other end of the RePorter's 5-foot-long cable is a 3-inch globe with a flat face that provides six ports: FireWire 400, FireWire 800, headphone (audio out), audio in, and two USB 2.0 ports.

You obviously lose these ports on the back of your Mac, but if you don't need easy access to a particular port, or you prefer to use the one in back, you can simply choose not to connect the RePorter to that port. One nice touch is the unit's internal light: when the RePorter is connected to a USB port on your computer, this light casts a subtle blue glow around the ports on the device's body, making them easier to identify in the dark.

My only significant complaint about the RePorter is that its round body gives it a tendency to roll around a bit when sitting on a desk or on top of a computer. But I've been waiting for something like the RePorter for a long time. It's one of those "Why didn't anyone else do this sooner?" products that provide an important feature: convenience.

## Point and CLIX

You may love Mac OS X, but using Terminal can be a bit intimidating. If you've used a few Terminal commands that you've seen on the Web but you don't really understand the ins and outs of the command line, you're a prime candidate for Rixstep's free **CLIX 1.5** (Command Line Interface for OS X; ★★★★½;

<http://rixstep.com/4/0/clix/>), a utility for storing and running Unix commands.

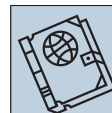
CLIX includes a default database containing more than 450 Terminal commands that perform useful actions in OS X—many of them usually inaccessible—categorized by the aspect of the interface they affect (Dock, Finder, Security, and System, for example).

Double-click on any command, and CLIX pre-

sents a dialog box that shows a title, a category, and a description, as well as the command itself. To execute the command, click on the Run button (you can use the Copy button to copy this output to the Clipboard for pasting into another application). You can also edit or customize commands in the Command Line field.

Because you're working with valid, proven commands, CLIX is a useful tool for learning Unix. But what really won me over was CLIX's ability to store personalized commands—either in the default database or in a new database. This feature is so useful on its own that CLIX may become a reference guide for your collected Unix tidbits even if you never touch its default database.

Some of the commands in CLIX's default database do pretty serious things, so read a command's description before running it; if you don't understand the command, then don't run it. This is especially true for commands that require administrative access. □



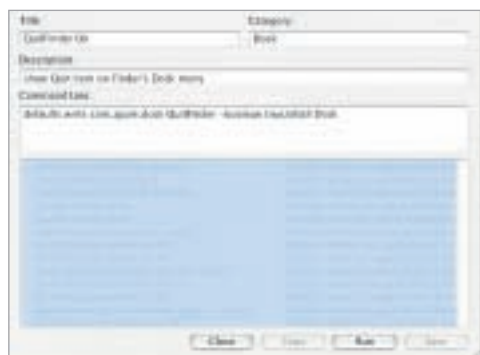
### GO TO WEBLOG:

The Mac Gems Weblog ([www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/](http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/)) contains longer versions of these reviews, as well as some Web exclusives.

Senior Writer DAN FRANKS ([www.danfranks.com](http://www.danfranks.com)) is the author of *Mac OS X Power Tools*, second edition (Sybex, 2004), and he is the reviews editor at Playlistmag.com. Send your thoughts on this column, or on things you'd like to see in future columns, to [macgems@macworld.com](mailto:macgems@macworld.com).



**Extension Ports** The RePorter puts your ports within easy reach.




**Unix Notepad** CLIX stores—and runs—your favorite Terminal commands.



# Mac Gems

Apple touts the Mac mini as compatible with any USB keyboard, but there's a catch—if your keyboard was designed for use with a Windows computer, it doesn't have the Mac's familiar **1** or **option** keys. Instead, it has **Alt** and **Windows** keys, which can perform the same functions as their Mac equivalents—but they're in the wrong order, so you end up with your **option** and **1** keys in switched positions.

That's where Michael Baltaks's free **DoubleCommand 1.5.3** (donations accepted; ; <http://doublecommand.sourceforge.net>) comes in handy. This OS X kernel extension lets you swap the functionality of the **Alt** and **Windows** keys, thus making any Windows keyboard behave just like a Mac keyboard (perfect for Windows-to-Mac switchers who already own keyboards, or for anyone who buys a Windows keyboard for its low price or special features).

This ability alone makes DoubleCommand a must-

have for Mac users who have Windows keyboards—but it can do a lot more. DoubleCommand got its name from its original purpose—to *remap* (change the function or position of) the **enter** key to the **1** key, thus giving PowerBook users two **1** keys. In the current version, the DoubleCommand preference pane allows you to remap a number of different keys on your keyboard to suit the way you work.


If you're a Mac user—new or old—who wants to use a Windows keyboard,

DoubleCommand is the first software you should download and install.

## Music Rescue

If you've got an iPod, you know how easy getting your music onto it and keeping it in sync with your Mac are. But you may have discovered that Apple doesn't provide a way for you to get music from an iPod to your Mac. Understandably, Apple doesn't want people using iPods as “music mules” that transfer tunes illicitly between computers.

The problem is, there are legitimate reasons for copying music off an iPod. For example, if your Mac's hard drive suddenly bites the dust and you haven't backed up your music, Apple's only solution is to rip everything from your CDs (a process that took me several months the first time). And Apple

won't let you redownload tracks you've purchased from the iTunes Music Store. So if you're in this boat, I'm happy to recommend Whitney Young's free **Senuti 0.23** (donations accepted; ; <http://wbyoung.ambitiouslemon.com>).

Senuti isn't the only utility out there that will help you get music from your iPod to your computer, but it just might be the easiest one to use. It provides an iTunes-like window listing the contents of your iPod, including all songs and playlists. (If iTunes launches and asks whether you want to link the iPod to this computer, you should decline—doing so will delete the music on your iPod that's not on your computer, the opposite of what you want to do.)

You can download songs from your iPod to your computer, and, if you prefer, Senuti can automatically add the tracks to your iTunes Library (even to a particular playlist). Senuti's live search filter works just like the one in iTunes—start to type the name of a track, an artist, or an album, and the list of results will narrow down as you type.

Another nice touch is Senuti's **Hide Songs In iTunes** option, which shows songs that are on your iPod but not in iTunes. I found this option useful for figuring out which of my titles I hadn't yet transferred from my Power Mac to my Mac mini.

I've encountered only two minor glitches in the app. First, I haven't been able to get the artwork feature—which is supposed to show artwork for those tracks that provide it—to work. Second, Senuti won't let you sort filtered search results by column. But if you have a legitimate need to fetch music from your iPod, you need Senuti.

## Count 'em Up

As a writer, I often face limitations on the maximum length of what I pen. Sometimes I use a word processor or text editor with a built-in word-count feature (BBEdit or Microsoft Word, for example), but often I don't. If an application is services-aware, as TextEdit is, I can select all the text in the current document and then choose the **Statistics** service to find out how many words it contains, but that's a bit of a pain.

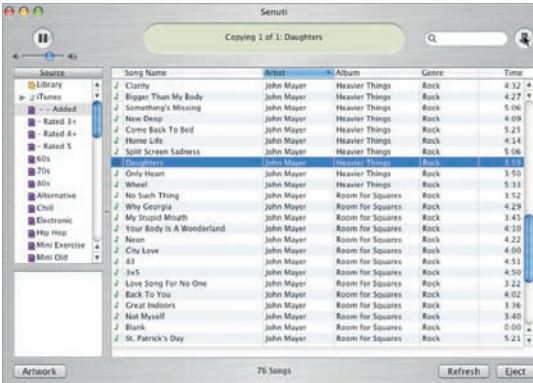


## Keyboard Swap

DoubleCommand lets you make better use of a Windows keyboard with your Mac.



# DVD Extractor



**Tune Transfer** With Senuti, you can move music from your iPod back to your Mac.

Even when an application does have a word-count feature, I can never be sure whether it's counting every word or leaving out *a*, *I*, and *the*, or whether it's counting hyphenated terms as one word or two. Although I've yet to find the perfect solution, I recently discovered SuperMagnus Software's free **Word Counter 1.7** (donations accepted; [www.supermagnus.com](http://www.supermagnus.com)), and I've been fairly pleased with it. Rather than integrating into any particular application, Word Counter provides its own text window. You can copy text from another program and paste it into the window, drag and drop text, or, in the case of a plain-text or RTF document, drag the file itself into the window. Click on the Count Words button, and you get both a word count and a character count.

What sets Word Counter apart from similar utilities are its TextEdit counter and its preference options. If you use TextEdit frequently, you'll appreciate Word Counter's palette. This palette remains visible while you're using TextEdit and lets you do word and character counts without having to copy or paste; it keeps track of the text in the active TextEdit window.

The only drawback to this feature is that each time you click on the Count Words button, Word Counter becomes the active application and doesn't switch back to TextEdit when it's done. To get around this, you need to enable Word Counter's auto-update option, which updates word counts at a chosen interval.

Other handy options include the ability to decide how long a word must be for Word Counter to count it—if you don't want to include *I* or *or*; you can tell the app to count only words with more than two let-

ters. You can also choose whether a hyphenated term counts as one word or as separate words. Finally, you can determine whether the character count includes spaces as characters.

Word Counter is a bit clunky and requires too much switching back and forth between it and the application you're typing in (even when you're using the TextEdit counter). But it's a useful, free tool with options that aren't available in many applications. If you often have to write pieces that contain a specific number of words, it's worth a try.

continues

With low-cost DVD burners and software such as Apple's iDVD and DVD Studio Pro, it's easy to put your movies onto DVDs. What isn't so easy is getting content off those DVDs. Because of the way DVDs store audio and video—mixed together in files called VOBs (Video Objects)—you can't simply edit or reuse it.

So why would you want to extract content from a DVD? Perhaps you want to make a multimedia portfolio of your work. Maybe you'd like to create a "greatest hits" DVD containing footage from several DVDs without recapturing from the original tapes (assuming you still have them). Or maybe you have a DVD recorder attached to your TV and want to edit the shows you've recorded.

If these situations sound familiar, you should check out Miraizon's \$60 **Cinematize 2.03** ([www.miraizon.com](http://www.miraizon.com)), which lets you pull content from unencrypted DVDs to your desktop in a number of different formats.

Cinematize lets you select your start and end points to decide exactly what video and/or audio to extract. You can preview your selection in full-motion video inside a window, but (unfortunately) the preview doesn't include audio—so it can be difficult to figure out what scene you're actually viewing.

You can decode to a QuickTime file, using the built-in QuickTime codecs, and choose the quality and aspect ratio (among other options). Or you can save the video as an elementary stream, which simply pulls video off the DVD and saves it, with no loss of quality, as an M2V file, which you can then import into DVD Studio Pro. The other option is an MPEG-2 program stream, which gives you an MPG file.

The Audio tab lets you pick the audio stream to extract—Cinematize can handle PCM, AC-3, and MP2 audio (but not DTS), and you can decode it to AIFF or WAV format, as an elementary stream, or as an MPEG-2 program stream. The

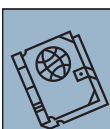
program can down-mix multichannel AC-3 audio to stereo audio.

The Output tab gives you options for the final output format of your extracted content. You can create a QuickTime file, a DV stream, or an AVI file with audio and video combined into a single file; create an MPEG-2 program stream file with audio and video combined; or save the content as separate stream files. Or if you prefer, you can save each chapter as its own segment. At output, Cinematize does an excellent job of properly synchronizing your audio and video.

If you need to edit or reuse content from your DVDs, Cinematize is a full-featured app that offers almost all the features you could ask for.—JONATHAN SEFF



**Second Time Around** Cinematize lets you breathe new life into DVD content and use it in many different ways.

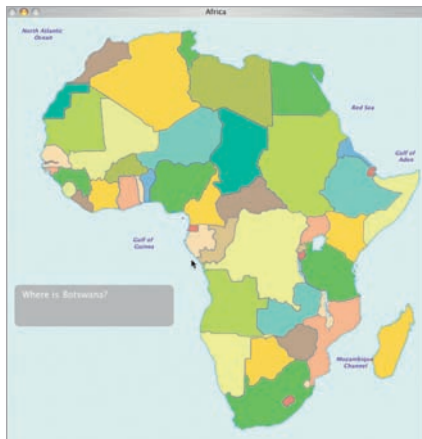


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PRODUCT	RATING	URL	DESCRIPTION
Mouseposé	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0360">find.macworld.com/0360</a>	Cursor highlighter

**Go Charting** World of Where helps kids and adults alike learn their geography.



## Where in the World

When I was a kid, we learned geography by filling in place names on copies of world and U.S. maps, and we learned country and state capitals by making flash cards with a country or a state on one side and its capital on the other. But learning geography is much easier and a bit more fun today, thanks to computers and applications such as World of Worlds Software's \$10 **World of Where 1.3.1** (🔗🔗🔗; [www.worldofworlds.net](http://www.worldofworlds.net)).

World of Where is actually two learning aids in one: a set of world and U.S. maps, and a geography quiz program. Each map displays country or state names, the capital of each country or state, and the names of nearby oceans and seas.

The Map mode also provides useful information about geographic locations: hold the mouse cursor over a country's name, and a tool tip appears displaying the country's size, population, and per-capita GDP; if you hover over the country's capital, you'll see the city's latitude and longitude.

If you want a printed copy of a map, or if you want to send a map to someone via e-mail, World of Where's Export Map command lets you save a copy of the current map in TIFF, JPEG, or PSD format.

But Test mode is my favorite part of the program. If you choose a region and start a test, World of Where removes all text from the regional map and then asks you where on the map you'll find a particular country (or in which country a particular capital resides).

In Soft Test mode, World of Where tells you if you've guessed incorrectly and gives you unlimited guesses to find the right country. In Hard Test mode, you get only a single guess, after which World of Where moves on to the next item, whether you were right or wrong. World of Where keeps track of your accuracy for country, state, and capital tests. This useful feature helps you (or your child or student) figure out which regions you need to study more carefully.

World of Where has two flaws. The first is that it can be difficult to click on some tiny countries and islands. The second is that World of Where doesn't include every country on the globe; it's currently missing a few island nations and protectorates. (The developer expects the next version to include these.)

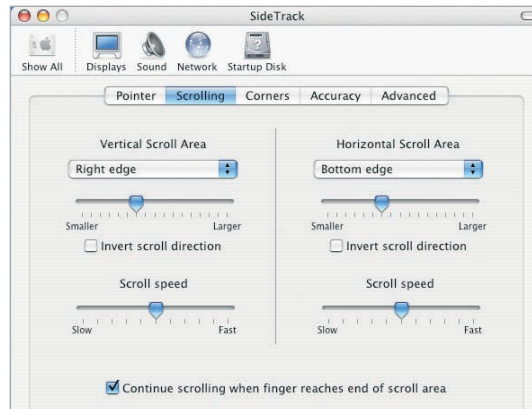
Even so, it's a great way to learn, and if you're a teacher, it can be an invaluable instructional aid.

## Scroll Padding

Apple's new PowerBooks feature a scrolling trackpad, which adds the ability to scroll through documents or pan within windows by dragging two fingers across the pad. Unfortunately, users of older PowerBooks can't take advantage of this feature, as it requires the new trackpad hardware. However, owners of other PowerBooks (and iBooks) can gain similar functionality—and more—by installing Raging Menace's \$15 **SideTrack 1.1.1** (★★★★½; [www.ragingmenace.com](http://www.ragingmenace.com)).

SideTrack is a replacement trackpad driver for OS X. When installed on a PowerBook or an iBook (but not the new PowerBooks), it lets you designate a portion of your PowerBook or iBook trackpad as a scroll pad—simply drag your finger up and down (or left and right) to scroll through (or pan across) windows. In addition, you can modify your trackpad so that pressing the trackpad button and tapping on the trackpad do different things; for example, one can be a standard click and the other can be a control-click. SideTrack also lets you assign the corners of the trackpad to different functions or keyboard shortcuts.

It also includes controls for customizing the speed and sensitivity of your PowerBook or iBook trackpad, both significant improvements over the options available in OS X. It even offers a Redmond Switcher



**Track, Tap, and Scroll** SideTrack adds advanced features to many PowerBook and iBook trackpads.

Acceleration setting that emulates the trackpad profile of many Windows laptops—helpful for new Mac users switching from Windows laptops.

SideTrack is a kernel extension, so make sure to read the documentation before you install it. But once you do, you'll likely never go back to the standard trackpad functionality. □

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Senior Writer DAN FRAKES ([www.danfrakes.com](http://www.danfrakes.com)) is the author of *Mac OS X Power Tools*, second edition (Sybex, 2004), and the reviews editor at [Playlistmag.com](http://Playlistmag.com). Send your thoughts on this column, or on things you'd like to see in future columns, to [macgems@macworld.com](mailto:macgems@macworld.com).

# Mac Gems

Although the ability to take unlimited photos allows digital photographers to make sure they get the best shots possible, it also has a drawback: at some point, you have to weed through the 63 pictures of your niece's first dance recital to find the three or four worth keeping.

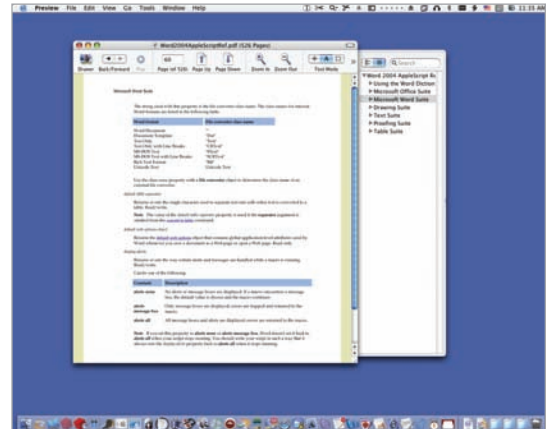
I used to import all my photos into iPhoto and then delete the ones I didn't like. I also tried using Image Capture to import photos—since it allows you to import images selectively—but it still required that I look at a bunch of photos in a window and 1-click on the ones I wanted to import. I tried a few other image-editing and -management utilities, but none of them really made the process any easier.

What I really wanted was an easy-to-use, fast way to review photos before they ever got into iPhoto. So when I spied Stick Software's \$10 **PhotoReviewer 1.4** (★★★★; [www.sticksoftware.com](http://www.sticksoftware.com)), my eyebrows raised in curious expectation. As it turns out, PhotoReviewer is just what I was looking for.

Although PhotoReviewer uses a standard slideshow mode for browsing photos, its real power is in letting you approve or veto images as you view them, and in making the process efficient. You approve or veto each image, one after another, as quickly as you can click on a button or press a key to pass judgment.

For each review session, you decide what happens to photos as you process them. You can leave approved images in place, copy them to a folder, or move them to a folder. Similarly, you can leave vetoed photos alone, delete them immediately, move them to the Trash, or move them to a specified folder. As you're viewing photos in PhotoReviewer, you can rotate or zoom in on them to get a better look. You can also use the arrow keys to skip an image and come back to it later. Once you get into an approve-or-veto groove, you'll fly through your images in no time at all.

Using PhotoReviewer in this way has turned out to be a major time-saver for me, and the software has a number of other useful features worth checking out if you're looking to streamline your photo-management process. (It even lets you play and review QuickTime movies.) If, like me, you spend a lot of time sifting through your pictures to figure out which ones are worth keeping, PhotoReviewer will pay for its paltry \$10 price in no time.



**Virtual Rug** Take better screenshots by sweeping your clutter under Backdrop.

## A Solid Background

Every once in a while, I come across a piece of software that's so simple but so useful that I can't believe no one has come up with it before. John Haney's free **Backdrop 1.2** (★★★★; [www.johnhaney.com/backdrop/](http://www.johnhaney.com/backdrop/)) is one of those apps.

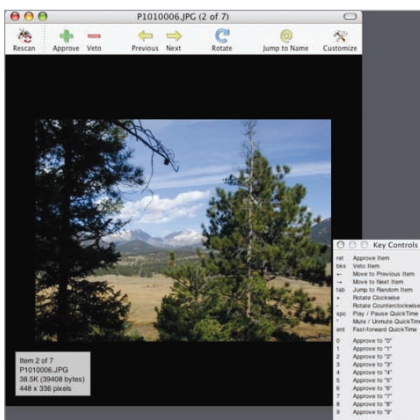
As a tech writer, I take a lot of screenshots, usually with the excellent Snapz Pro X 2 (★★★★; *Mac Gems*, May 2004). But since I usually have lots of applications and windows open, I have to move a bunch of stuff out of the way to keep it from cluttering the screenshot. And if I've got folders and files littering the desktop, I have to clean those up, too. (If you've ever taken screenshots for a book, an article, a training guide, a Web site, or a poster or flyer, you know the hassle of which I speak.)

With Backdrop, window cleanup is a thing of the past. Just launch Backdrop, and you'll see a solid background that fills your entire screen, leaving only the menu bar and the Dock visible. You then bring the desired app to the front and take your screenshot.

As simple as it sounds, Backdrop does offer a few useful options, including the ability to choose a color other than white for your background. You can even use an image file instead of a solid color—an easy way to watermark your screenshots. And although Backdrop's default behavior is to act as an application layer—meaning that it floats between

continues

**Photo Filter** PhotoReviewer makes it easy (and fast) to get rid of unwanted photos before they ever make it into iPhoto.





applications to provide a background that blocks everything behind it—it can also function as a temporary desktop background. This is helpful if you want a standard screenshot, icons and all, but with a different background than your day-to-day desktop image or color.

My one real complaint is that if you have multiple displays, Backdrop works only on your main screen. On the other hand, I tend to take screenshots on the main screen anyway, so I haven't found that to be a significant limitation. If, like me, you take a lot of screenshots, Backdrop is a must-have.

Mac 411

In my line of work, people often ask me questions about particular Mac models, but despite my years of experience with Macs (and contrary to the misconceptions of my friends), I'm not a walking encyclopedia of Mac specs and information. When I need to look up information, I avoid browsing Apple's Knowledge Base or wading through Google search results. Instead, I turn to Ian Page's free (donations accepted) **Macracker 3.0b2** (★★★★); [www.macracker.ca](http://www.macracker.ca).


Macracker is a browsable and searchable database of information on almost every Apple product ever made, from the 128K to the iMac G5; it even covers the ill-fated Mac clones from Motorola, Power-

Computing, and Umax, and it includes Apple scanners, printers, and displays. Each entry in Macracker is chock-full of information, down to the most minute detail: processor type and speed, bus speed, drives, memory, graphics card, size, weight, supported OS versions, latest firmware update—you name it. Macracker can tell you what type of RAM you should buy to upgrade the original 12-inch PowerBook G4 (PC2100 DDR266 200-pin SO-DIMM), how much the LaserWriter 8500 weighed (70.4 pounds), when Apple released the Color OneScanner (1991—the company discontinued it in 1992), and how much power a dual-2.5GHz Power Mac G5 consumes (a maximum of 600 watts).

As a nice bonus, each product entry in Macracker features an image of the item, a brief description



**Encyclopedia Mac** Macracker tells you anything you ever wanted to know about Apple products—and then some.

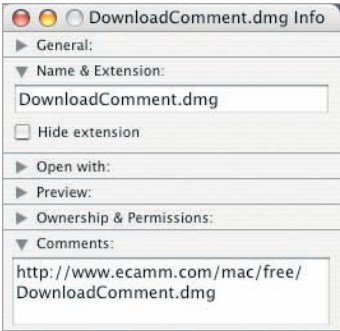
GO TO WEBLOG:			
 The Mac Gems Weblog ( <a href="http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/">www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/</a> ) has longer versions of the reviews you see here, as well as some you won't find in this column. Check out this month's Web exclusives.			
PRODUCT	RATING	URL	DESCRIPTION
Clipboard-Sharing	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0191">find.macworld.com/0191</a>	Clipboard utility
discHub	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0133">find.macworld.com/0133</a>	CD- and DVD-storage product
Galerie	★★★★	<a href="http://find.macworld.com/0134">find.macworld.com/0134</a>	photo-gallery tool

pulled (with permission) from the Apple Museum or [www.apple-history.com](http://www.apple-history.com), and—for computers—an audio demo of the model's startup chime.

Suffice it to say that if you need information about an Apple product, Macracker will have it. It's a great resource for upgrading, and equally useful when you're buying or selling a Mac, since you'll have a complete set of tech specs for each model. Macracker is the most comprehensive and easy-to-use resource on Apple products I've seen. The fact that it's free is icing on the cake.

Where Did I Get That?

Despite several impressive recent entries in the Mac OS X browser market, Safari remains my favorite. But it's still missing some features. For example, Microsoft Internet Explorer for OS 9 provided a very clever method for keeping track of where you found a particular item: it added the download URL to the file's Finder comments. When I wanted to find out where I got a file, I could simply use the Finder's Get Info command to view the download



**Return Address** DownloadComment reminds you where those Safari-downloaded files came from.

URL. As someone who is lucky enough to get paid to try new software, I'm downloading more stuff today than ever before, and—thanks to developers who don't adequately document their software—I'm often left wondering where I found a file or disk image. So I was quite pleased to discover Ecamm Network's free **DownloadComment 1.0** (★★★★); [www.ecamm.com](http://www.ecamm.com)). Install DownloadComment (it runs in the background as an OS X Input Manager), and Safari adds the download information to the Comments field of any file you download by clicking on a link in Safari. Déjà vu, indeed.

DownloadComment does have a couple of significant restrictions: it works only with Safari, and it doesn't currently work for files downloaded using Safari's Save Linked File As command. (The developer plans to remedy the latter shortcoming in a forthcoming update.) But even with these limitations, DownloadComment is a useful utility that fills one of the few gaps in the otherwise great browser that is Safari. □

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# Mac Gems

If you have Apple's AirPort Express, then you probably know you can use iTunes to wirelessly send your music to speakers connected to the Express. But this technology, called AirTunes, has several drawbacks, the most significant of which is that it can broadcast only audio playing through iTunes. If you want to listen to RealAudio or Windows Media files, or audio being played in a Web browser, then you're out of luck.

But never fear, for the folks at Rogue Amoeba can help. The company's \$25 **Airfoil 1.0.1** (★★★★; [www.rogueamoeba.com](http://www.rogueamoeba.com)) lets you stream audio from any application to an AirPort Express. And it couldn't be easier to use.

In Airfoil's main window, you choose the application providing the audio you want to transmit. You

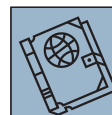
whereas AirTunes mutes local audio when broadcasting, you can set Airfoil to play audio on the local computer while it's being played via your AirPort Express (although the two signals may be slightly out of sync). And audio-effect plug-ins that don't work with AirTunes—the popular Volume Logic, for example—will work via Airfoil. Just tell iTunes to play locally—not via AirTunes to your AirPort Express—and let Airfoil send the audio.

One Airfoil quirk has to do with how it interacts with running applications. If you elect to install Airfoil's Instant Hijack component, clicking on the Transmit button commences the transmission immediately. However, Instant Hijack uses Unsanity's Application Enhancer—which some people don't like using. The workaround is to either select the desired audio program in Airfoil before it's launched, or allow Airfoil to relaunch it if it's already running when you begin transmission.

## Bright Light! Bright Light!

I recently bought a great 20-inch wide-screen LCD—but I didn't buy it from Apple. Sadly, I couldn't justify the \$1,000 (plus tax) that the shiny aluminum model I'd been eyeing for so long would have cost. Instead, I turned to a third party and found a display with the same 1,680-by-1,050-pixel resolution as Apple's display for a little more than half the price. It's got one major problem, however: it's too bright.

I don't mean that it's a little bit too bright; I mean that it's "staring at the sun" bright. During the day, in a well-lit office, it's almost bearable, but in the evening I pretty much need to break out the welder's helmet. I've used the display's controls to lower the brightness as much as I can, but on this particular model, if a level of 100 means "prison tower spotlight," a level of 0 is still "police car floodlight." And no amount of OS X display calibration has helped.



### GO TO WEBLOG:

The Mac Gems Weblog ([www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/](http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/)) contains longer versions of these reviews, as well as some Web exclusives.

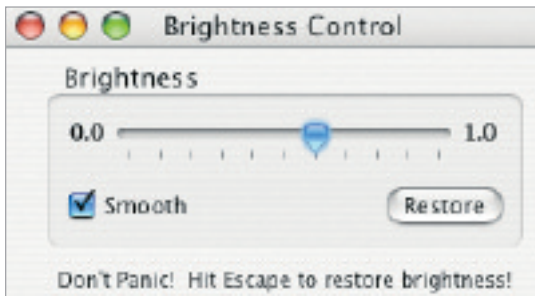


**Free Expression** Airfoil frees your AirPort Express from its iTunes-only audio shackles.

can pick a running or recently used application, or you can navigate to any application on your computer. If you have more than one AirPort Express, you then pick which one to transmit to. Click on the Transmit button, and your chosen application's audio will begin playing through the speakers connected to your AirPort Express. You can control the volume level of the signal via Airfoil or link the volume level to your Mac's volume control.

Since it works with any program, Airfoil is a great way to listen to Webcasts of sporting events (or any other streaming audio) on your home stereo. However, keep in mind that just like with iTunes, there's a slight delay between when a sound is produced by an application and when it's played through your AirPort Express.

Airfoil even offers advantages for people who are simply broadcasting iTunes audio. For example,



**Not Too Bright** Brightness Control tones down the brightness of non-Apple displays.

It turns out that I'm not alone in this experience. Scavenging the Net for a solution, I was fortunate to come across Splasm Software's free **Brightness Control 1.0.3** (★★★★; [www.splasm.com](http://www.splasm.com)). The latest entry in my library of one-function wonders, Brightness Control's claim to fame is that it provides a slider control for dimming your display's screen. Somewhere between the black screen and full brightness is the pleasant "just right" that made my new monitor's light levels tolerable for unshielded use. (A Smooth option makes the transitions between brightness levels, well, smoother.)

If you accidentally set your brightness to 0, don't worry—just press the escape key to restore full brightness. (Or press 1-Q to quit Brightness Control; its setting applies only when the application is running.)

Because it's simply dimming the screen, Brightness Control doesn't offer increased contrast to compensate for a lack thereof at the lowest brightness levels. Being able to dim multiple displays independently would also be helpful, although I understand why that would be technically difficult. And since its purpose is to adjust a systemwide setting, I wish it worked as a preference pane or a menu item instead of as an application that remains open (in the Dock and on screen). But those quirks aside, it has made my brand-new monitor usable, and for that I'm extremely grateful.

## SMB Made Easy

With OS X 10.3, Apple made the Mac a full citizen on Windows networks. For many Mac users, the biggest advantage of this move was the ability to connect to shared volumes on Windows computers (and other computers providing SMB/CIFS shares). Unfortunately, there are a couple of problems with OS X's built-in connection methods, which involve using the Finder's Connect To Server dialog box. The first is that you need to know how to format the SMB URL of the target computer. (If you click on the Browse button in the dialog box, you may be able to see the desired Windows share, but only if it's on the same network subnet—and even then it's not guaranteed, due to a slightly buggy Network continues

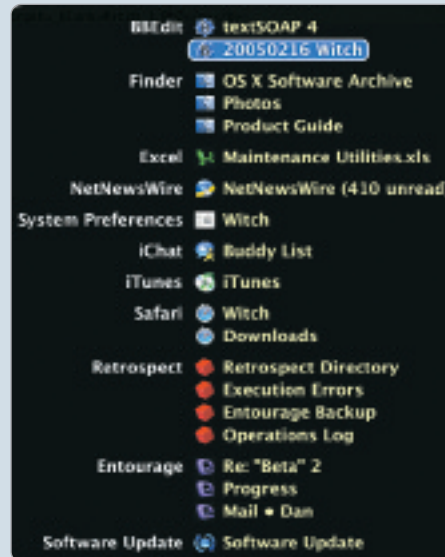
# Promising Prospect: Witch

Two of my favorite OS X features are the 1-tab Application Switcher and Exposé. But I wish there were a way to combine them—a way to use the former's keyboard control to navigate directly to a particular window. Luckily, my colleague (and Mac-world contributing editor) Rob Griffiths pointed me toward Peter Maurer's Witch ([www.petermaurer.de](http://www.petermaurer.de)), a prerelease version of a utility that fits the bill.

Pressing and holding a keyboard shortcut (option-tab by default) brings up an overlay showing a vertical list of open applications along with each's windows. Pressing the tab key repeatedly, or holding it down, lets you choose the window you want

to switch to; releasing the option key brings that window to the front and makes its application active. As with OS X's Application Switcher, applications and their windows are listed in the order of recent use—the current program first, then the next most recently used program, and so on. The list even includes minimized windows, which makes Witch the only way to use the keyboard to access minimized windows.

Witch provides many additional features for working with windows. Pressing Z while a window's name is highlighted zooms that window (the equivalent of clicking on the window's green



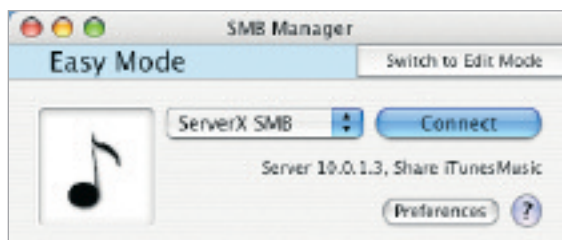
**Which Window?** Witch lets you quickly access any open window in any application.

zoom button), thus providing one of the only ways to access this feature via the keyboard; pressing M minimizes the window to the Dock; pressing W closes the window. All of these actions happen without the window actually being brought to the front, so you can modify every open window from within Witch without having to switch to those windows individually.

You can also set up different keyboard shortcuts that restrict Witch's overlay to subsets of windows (only minimized windows or only those belonging to the currently active application, for example). Witch also lets you set up keyboard shortcuts for window-related features that function all the time—not just when Witch's switcher overlay is on the screen—such as the ability to close all minimized windows.

Finally, Witch provides a number of options for customizing the appearance of the switcher overlay, including translucency, background and text color, shadows, and whether or not to display application names next to window names.

Witch is still in development, but I've found it to be one of the stabler pieces of beta software I've tested—and it's one that I'll be using regularly.



**One-Click Connections** With SMB Manager, connecting to Windows shares is easier than ever.



**Fantastic Plastic** PlasticSmith's range of Mac mini accessories includes (from left to right) the mini Tower, the mini Grandstand, and the mini Skirt.

Browser implementation.) The second is that many users find that they have to type in their password every time they connect—for some reason, no matter how many times you select Add To Keychain in the password dialog box, it doesn't work. Great for security; bad for convenience.

You can make an alias of a mounted Windows share and then double-click on that alias to initiate the connection in the future; you still need to provide your password, but at least you don't have to remember and type the URL format. Or you can create an AppleScript to mount a Windows volume without having to enter your password. But if you connect to a number of Windows volumes, it's a pain to create one of those scripts for each share.

All of this is a long-winded way to say that I'm glad I came across Supinfo's free **SMB Manager 1.5** (🔗; [macworld.com/0395](http://macworld.com/0395)), which saves your

login information and lets you quickly connect to frequently accessed Windows shares. Enter information for as many favorites as you like, give each one a descriptive name and even a custom icon, and never enter a password again. (If you've been using the Finder's Connect To Server dialog box for a while and have added a number of favorite servers, SMB Manager can even convert them to SMB Manager Favorites.)

Once you're set up, the application's Easy mode lets you choose the favorite to which you want to connect (via a pop-up menu), and you then click on Connect. You can bring SMB Manager to the front by pressing a systemwide keyboard shortcut, so it works much like the Finder's Connect To Server dialog box. (You can even set SMB Manager so that it doesn't show up in the Dock.) And if you frequently connect to the same shares, you can tell SMB Manager to connect to those particular shares at launch.

If you often connect to Windows SMB shares, forget the Finder; SMB Manager will make your connections much easier.

### Accessories Mini

When Apple announced the new Mac mini, I knew it wouldn't take long before companies started making accessories for it. The first products came from PlasticSmith (previously known for its Lapvantage laptop stand). Easily the most interesting product in Plastic-



smith's mini lineup is the \$50 **mini Tower** (🔵🔵🔵🔵; [www.plasticsmith.com](http://www.plasticsmith.com)). If even the Mac mini's tiny 6.5-inch-square footprint is too big for you, the mini Tower lets you turn the Mac mini on its side in a stand that takes up only 7.25 by 2.75 inches of desk-top space.

But that's just the functional side of the mini Tower—it also happens to be quite attractive. The stylish stand is made of a pair of polished acrylic slabs connected by another piece of acrylic, just over 2 inches wide, that wraps around three sides. (The fourth side is open to allow you to slide your Mac mini inside.) Each narrow edge has two long slits; the ones on the front accommodate your mini's optical-drive slot—so you can insert the mini with its top facing either left or right—and the others provide ventilation. (My initial concerns about ventilation were put to rest when, in my testing, the Mac mini's fan turned on no more often when in the case than when out of it.)

Another useful Plasticsmith product is the \$40 **mini Grandstand** (🔵🔵🔵). Available in either laser-cut steel (the mini Grandstand steel) or the same polished acrylic as the mini Tower (the mini Grandstand clear), the Grandstand is a monitor stand that's just tall enough to fit over the top of your Mac mini, and that supports displays as heavy as 60 pounds—it's an effective use of space. The clear version is more eye-catching, but the steel model looks a bit more professional and hides cables and such.

The final product in Plasticsmith's Mac mini accessory trio, the **mini Skirt** (🔵🔵), just may take the award for best accessory name of 2005. On the other hand, it won't win too many awards for functionality, since it doesn't really do anything—it's just an acrylic base for the Mac mini. But it looks cool, and Plasticsmith has done a great job of making the Skirt a perfect fit for the Mac mini; I give it plenty of aesthetic props.

The \$25 standard mini Skirt is outdone only by the \$40 mini Skirt glo, which features a built-in blue or white LED and frosted, nonpolished edges (which diffuse the light). Plug the glo's USB cable into one of your Mac mini's USB ports, and you're glowing (a power switch lets you turn this effect off when you get tired of otherworldly illumination). Unfortunately, the Mac mini's two USB ports leave little room for luxuries such as a glowing computer stand, but the company promises that a USB hub version is in the works.

If you have a Mac mini and want your desk to hold it in the most space-efficient manner possible, the mini Tower and mini Grandstand are both great accessories. If you just want people to stop and look, slip on a mini Skirt. It's all form and little function, but it's nice to look at. □

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Senior Writer DAN FRAKES ([www.danfrakes.com](http://www.danfrakes.com)) is the author of *Mac OS X Power Tools*, second edition (Sybex, 2004), and the reviews editor at Playlist-mag.com. Send your thoughts on this column, or on things you'd like to see in future columns, to [macgems@macworld.com](mailto:macgems@macworld.com).

# Mac Gems

BY DAN FRAKES

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## URL HOLDER

### URLwell 1.2

Like many people, I tend to use my Mac's desktop to temporarily store files. Sifting through my files recently, I was surprised to find a few dozen Internet Location files—the URL bookmark files you get when you drag a link from your Web browser or an e-mail message to the Finder—that I'd put on my desktop. I had already revisited many of them, and I realized that I needed a better way to deal with these URLs. Then I came across Enigmarelle Development's free URLwell 1.2.1 (🔗🔗🔗; [www.enigmarelle.com](http://www.enigmarelle.com)), a storage area for URLs. Just drag a URL you want to store temporarily—from a Web page, an e-mail message, or even your browser's address bar—to URLwell's menu-bar icon and drop it there to add it to the menu.

Choosing a URL from the URLwell menu opens that site in a new tab or window in your preferred Web browser. This may sound like pretty much any browser's bookmarks menu, but URLwell is specifically designed for URLs you want to check only once. You simply set URLwell's preferences to either remove a URL from the menu or check it off after you've used it. The only quirk I've found is that there's no way to "uncheck" a checked-off item—a feature that would come in handy if you wanted to revisit a site again.

URLwell's menu also bests Safari's bookmarks—at least for tracking URLs you need only temporarily—by providing a number of useful features that help you manage your bookmarks. You can manually add a site by typing in its name and URL; export your list of URLs to a text or HTML file; and clear items from the menu (either all of them or just checked-off items). And via URLwell's Preferences dialog box, you can manually add and remove individual items, and you can even grab HTML-formatted links for inclusion on a Web site.



**Web-Site Waiting Room** URLwell conveniently saves those "I'll check that out later" URLs so your desktop stays tidy.

URLwell isn't a bookmark manager, but for its intended purpose, I've found it to be exceptionally handy.

## CALENDAR PUBLISHER

### iCalPublish 2.0

If you're a frequent user of Apple's iCal calendar program, you know that one of its handiest features is the ability to create multiple calendars that you can view individually or in any combination. You also likely know that you can publish these calendars on the Internet via a .Mac account or WebDAV server, so you and others can view them in a Web browser or subscribe to them in any calendar program that's compatible with the ICS format.

Tiger users can create a calendar group to export multiple calendars as a

single calendar, but for people still on Panther, there's no way to combine your iCal calendars into one published calendar. Luckily, you can get around this limitation with The Buddy System's \$15 iCalPublish 2.0 (🔗🔗🔗; [www.buddy.com](http://www.buddy.com)). iCalPublish lets you publish a single, combined calendar, or any combination of iCal calendars (your own or those to which you've subscribed), to your .Mac account or any WebDAV server.

iCalPublish also provides some useful options: you can add a prefix to the names of events from a particular calendar (nice for seeing which events came from which calendar); include subjects in calendar events; and include any notes you've added to events in iCal. You can also control when new calendars get published.

Despite its otherwise excellent functionality, iCalPublish does have a few problems. It puts some buttons in odd places; if you change the name of a published calendar, you need to remove the previous calendar manually from your server; and—due to a limitation of iCal—published calendars don't retain the colors of the source calendars. But iCalPublish is still a useful, one-of-a-kind utility for Panther users who have more than one iCal calendar and want to publish them together. And the included Read Me file is clear and understandable, which can't be said for a lot of the software I review for *Mac Gems*.

## COOKIE MANAGER

### Cookies Eater 1.1

Many Web sites use cookies—small bits of information about your browsing sessions—to save your login information and preferences for viewing that site, or to keep track of items you've added to an online shopping cart. Sites store these cookies on your hard drive and request them each time you visit. For the most part, cookies don't do any harm, and one site can't access another site's cookies. Still, some people have reasons for disabling cookies or deleting specific ones

continues



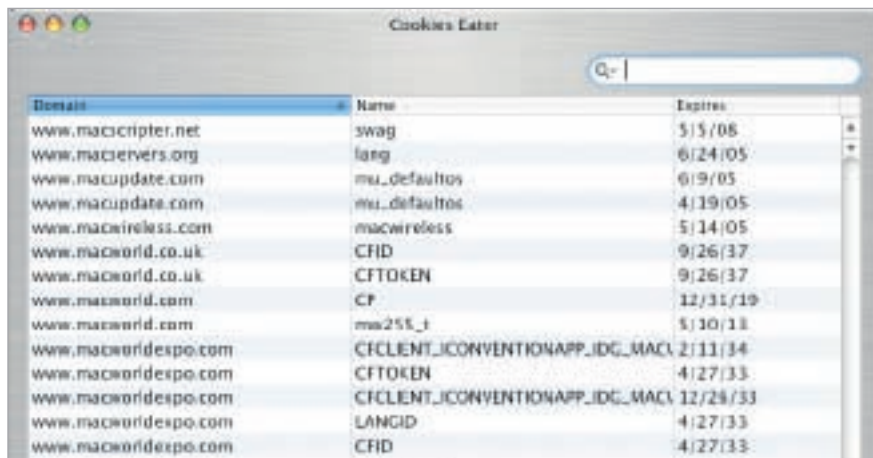
**Calendars Coalesce** iCalPublish lets you combine and publish multiple iCal calendars as one.

## MAC GEMS

(for example, some cookies keep you logged in to a site, something you may not want on a shared computer).

Most browsers, including Safari, let you view basic information about and manage cookies. But if you work with your cookies frequently, Safari's cookie-management functionality leaves a lot to be desired.

For a better solution, check out Nicolas Valcasara's free Cookies Eater 1.1 (🔗; [macworld.com/0491](http://macworld.com/0491)). Like Safari's own cookie options (in Preferences: Security), Cookies Eater lets you view your cookies and sort them by domain (Web site), name, and expiration date. You can also get information on a cookie, viewing its path and contents (although not its security value). But several additional features make Cookies Eater a much better solution than Safari for managing your cookies. First and foremost is its search field: by typing a domain, or part of a domain, into the field, you can filter the list of cookies to just those associated with that domain. (Alternatively, if you know



**Toss Your Cookies** Cookies Eater lets you search for, edit, and delete individual cookies.

the name of the cookie you want to find, you can change the search criterion from Domain to Name.)

Once you've located the desired cookies, you can select them all and delete them, just as you can in Safari—Cookies Eater even lets you undo accidental

deletions. But Cookies Eater has another handy feature that power users will appreciate: you can not only view more information about a cookie, but also *edit* that information: domain, expiration date, name, path, and value. I don't recommend editing cookies if you don't know exactly what you're doing, but if you do, Cookies Eater makes the process simple.

If you spend much time in Safari's Show Cookies dialog box, you'll utilize that time more efficiently with Cookies Eater.

## NEW-DOCUMENT CREATOR

### Document Palette

Creating a new document in OS X has traditionally entailed switching to the appropriate application, creating a new document, choosing the Save command, and then navigating—via the Save dialog box—to the folder in which you want the new document to reside. When I create a new document, I usually have a pretty good idea where I'm going to save it. In fact, that folder is often open in the Finder. So I've always wanted the ability to say "Create a new document right here."

Vertical Eye's \$8 Document Palette (🔗; [www.verticaleye.net](http://www.verticaleye.net)) grants my wish. Document Palette runs as a background application, with a separate foreground app that you launch just to set preferences. A keyboard shortcut brings up a translucent palette showing possible document types—by default, plain-text, rich-text, or HTML. Choose one to create that type of document in the active Finder folder.

But Document Palette also lets you set up your own document template. Just create a blank document in the desired application.

continues

## Flickr and iPhoto: Hand in Hand

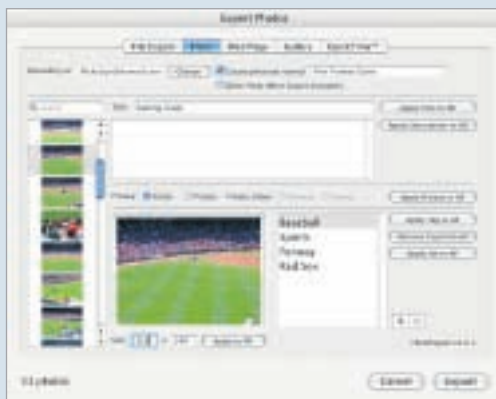
One of the best things about digital cameras is the ease with which they let you share photos. You can print them on demand; e-mail them; or—as is becoming more and more popular—upload them to a Web site. In fact, some Web services focus solely on picture sharing. One such service has become particularly popular, thanks to its array of features and free membership level—Flickr.

At the same time, one of the strengths of the Mac platform is iPhoto, which makes it easy and fun to manage your images. iPhoto even lets you share photos through the three aforementioned methods, but it's generally limited to publishing photos to Apple's HomePage or exporting to HTML. Wouldn't it be great if you could publish iPhoto images directly to Flickr?

Now you can, using Fraser Speirs' open-source (and free) **Flickr Export 1.2.1 plug-in for iPhoto** (🔗; [www.speirs.org](http://www.speirs.org)), which adds a Flickr tab to the Export Photo window in iPhoto 4 or 5. You then specify a target Flickr Photoset (similar to an iPhoto album), or create a new one. Flickr supports tags, and the plug-in converts your iPhoto keywords to tags that Flickr can understand. The plug-in can also fill in the image titles—and the descriptions—using the corresponding values from iPhoto.

Flickr also offers a resize option that will resize or constrain your photos before upload. This can be useful, as its free membership level allows you to upload only 10MB of photos each month. Unfortunately, the plug-in currently doesn't display the available amount of upload bandwidth, nor will it warn you that you're about to exceed that limit—you'll find out when it happens. According to the developer, both of these features will appear in a future version of the software.

If you use iPhoto to manage your digital photo collection but you really dig Flickr's handling of photo publication—tagging, photo sets, a photo stream, and comments—the Flickr Export plug-in for iPhoto may offer you the ideal bridge between the two.—DERIK DELONG



**Web Exporter** The Flickr Export plug-in for iPhoto makes it easy to post your photos on the hot new photo site.

cation and save it to your hard drive; then launch the Document Palette application. Drag your document template into the Documents window. Name the document icon in the palette, assign it a keyboard shortcut, and choose whether you want to delete the original file after adding it to Document Palette. Because the new documents that Document Palette creates are clones of your original version, they don't have to be blank—you can add templates of documents you frequently need, making this the most efficient way I've seen to create new documents based on a template. Since I've started using Document Palette, it has become a must-have in my own OS X tool chest.



**New Document** Use Document Palette to create a new document in any open Finder window (or on the desktop) without opening an application.

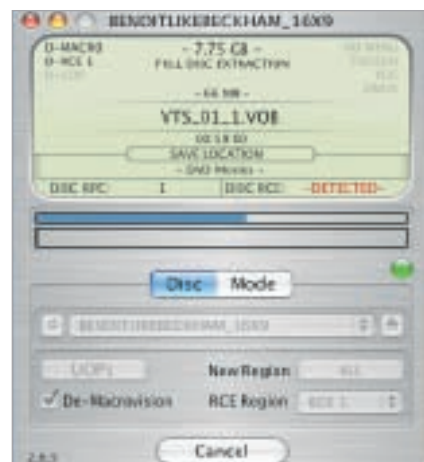
## DVD RIPPER

# MacTheRipper 2.6.6

Having a PowerBook with a DVD drive is great for lengthy plane flights, since it means I can watch my own movies. But bringing DVDs means I have to carry more things in my travel bag, and I'd rather not risk scratching (or, even worse, losing) all those expensive discs. And, of course, running a DVD drive sucks up a lot of battery power.

The solution to my dilemma is to copy (or rip) my DVDs (movies I *own*, of course) to my PowerBook's hard drive. The best tool I've found for the task is the free MacTheRipper 2.6.6 (🔗🔗🔗; [www.ripdifferent.com/~mtr/](http://www.ripdifferent.com/~mtr/)).

Just insert a DVD, launch MacTheRipper, choose your settings (whether you want the whole disc or just the movie portion, for example), and then click



**DVD Saver** MacTheRipper copies your DVDs to your laptop—so you can keep the originals at home, safe and sound.

on the Go button. The ripping process takes about 30 to 40 minutes for an average-length DVD; when it's finished, your movie will be sitting on your hard drive in a folder called VIDEO\_TS, inside another folder bearing the movie's name. To play a ripped movie, you simply launch Apple's DVD Player application, choose File: Open VIDEO\_TS Folder, and then navigate to the movie's



VIDEO\_TS folder. You can now watch the movie just as if you had inserted the actual DVD. (MacTheRipper won't rip every disc, but of the films from my library that I've tried, it worked successfully with all but one.)

## iPOD PRESENTATION HOLDER

# iPresent It 1.2

Every seasoned presenter knows that if you're giving an important Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple Keynote presentation, you should have a backup. Although bringing a copy of your slide show on a CD, a DVD, or a flash memory drive is always a good approach, if something goes wrong with your computer, you still have to find another computer to use—and fast. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to bring a second presentation system with you?

If you've got an iPod photo, you can do exactly that—using ZappTek's \$18 iPresent It 1.2 (★★★★; [www.zapptek.com](http://www.zapptek.com)), you can put your presentation right on the iPod photo as a slide show and bring it along as your backup. If disaster occurs, you can just hook up the iPod photo to a TV or a video projector and



**Ultraportable Presentations** Keep a copy of your PowerPoint or Keynote presentations on your iPod photo with iPresent It.

proceed with the slide show without breaking stride.

iPresent It takes care of the entire process for you—converting your Keynote or PowerPoint presentation to images, optimizing the images for the iPod photo, and even importing them into a new album in iPhoto if desired.

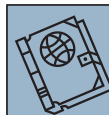
Since the iPod supports only still images, iPresent It doesn't support animation (builds and transitions). If your presentation is in Keynote 2 format, though, iPresent It can approximate builds by creating a separate slide for each stage of the build. If you're using Power-

Point or Keynote 1 and want builds, you'll need to create slides manually in the original presentation, one slide for each stage.

iPresent It isn't limited to a single presentation; if you add multiple presentation files to the slide-show list, iPresent It will create a new slide show for each file. iPresent It also keeps track of changes to presentations, alerting you when you need to update a presentation on your iPod.

If your job or your grade depends on presentations and you've got an iPod photo, iPresent It is a handy tool for making sure they go off without a hitch. Just don't forget your iPod photo's AV cable. □

Senior Writer DAN FRAKES ([www.danfrakes.com](http://www.danfrakes.com)) is also the reviews editor of Playlistmag.com. Send your thoughts on this column, or on things you'd like to see in future columns, to [macgems@macworld.com](mailto:macgems@macworld.com).



### GO TO WEBLOG:

The Mac Gems Weblog ([www.macworld.com/macgems](http://www.macworld.com/macgems)) contains even more reviews. Check out this month's Web exclusives.

PRODUCT	RATING	URL	DESCRIPTION
BlogAssist	★★★★	<a href="http://macworld.com/0492">macworld.com/0492</a>	Weblog tagger
Cordz Multi-Connection Survival Tool	★★★★	<a href="http://macworld.com/0493">macworld.com/0493</a>	Portable Ethernet and phone cable

# Mac Gems

BY DAN FRAKES

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## COMIC-STRIP CREATOR

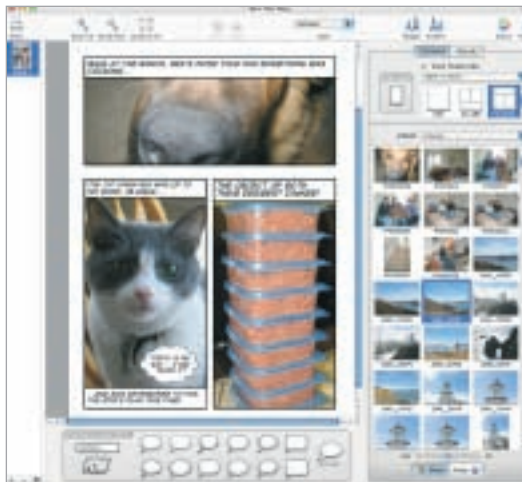
### Comic Life 1.1.1

Most of the software I review in *Mac Gems* fills a clear need, but some of it is just for fun. Case in point: Plasq's \$25 Comic Life 1.1.1 (🔗🔗🔗🔗; [www.plasq.com](http://www.plasq.com)), an amazingly clever app that lets you make comic-book pages, or even an entire comic book, out of your own images or drawings.

You start by picking a page size (standard paper, a photo size, a Web page, a blog, or an iPhoto book layout, for example) and choosing from 40 different page layouts (a single panel, multiple panels laid out in various patterns, picture-in-picture panels, and more). You can then click on the Details tab to customize a layout.

Comic Life provides access to your entire iPhoto library, as well as to images on your hard drive that aren't in iPhoto—such as sketches or drawings you may want to use for cells. In either case, you get resizable previews without having to switch to another application. The program even lets you capture images with an iSight camera. Once you've found the right image for a cell, drag it into that cell; Comic Life automatically crops it to fit. To change the crop, just drag the image around within the cell; handles on the edges let you zoom in and out. If you're running Tiger, you can apply Core Image filters to your images. And when you double-click on a placed image, a handy rotation tool appears in its center.

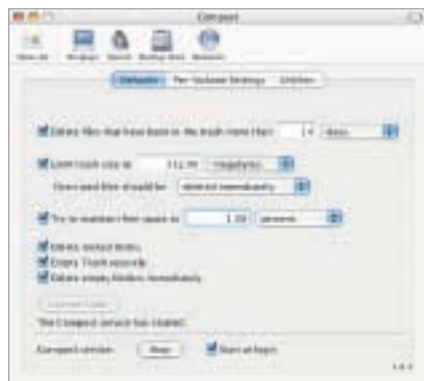
Now that you've got an image, you need some text. The bottom of the Comic Life window has many text-bubble designs, including shapes that comic aficionados will recognize as representing whispers, exclamations, and thoughts. You can even link bubbles, and there's a caption box for narrations. Just drag a bubble to a cell, position it, and then type your text. You can resize the bubble to fit your words, and the Bigger and Smaller buttons in the toolbar let you adjust the text's size. You can also adjust the length and angle of the bubble's tail.



**An Easy Cell** You can create your own comics—and even comic books—with Comic Life.

A nice touch, especially if you're designing an action-oriented comic, is the sound-effect tool, which allows you to graphically express your sound effect of choice—*pow*, *smack*, *thud*, and so on—and then resize and distort the graphic for the intended effect.

Once your comic creation is complete, you can print it. You can also export it as an HTML file with images, as just images (one image per page), as a QuickTime slide show (each page is a slide), or as an iPhoto album. If you designed your comic using one of Comic Life's iPhoto book layouts, exporting your comic book to iPhoto means you can then order a printed copy. Alternatively, if you have a



**Take Out the (Old) Trash** Compost can automatically delete stale Trash contents or delete the Trash from only a particular volume.

.Mac account, you can publish your comic book to the Web using your .Mac account's Web space. Comic Life is definitely one of the coolest products I've seen this year.

## TRASH ENHANCER

### Compost 1.6.4

OS X's Trash has two significant limitations: it doesn't empty itself, and it doesn't let you empty just part of it. The first limitation is an issue for everyone, but I find that it disproportionately affects new users, who end up with gigabytes of information sitting in unemptied Trash Cans. The second limitation is more of a concern to power users—people who want to rid the Trash of only files deleted from a particular volume, or only files that have been in the Trash for a while.

If either limitation is a problem for you, check out Greg Weston's \$9 Compost 1.6.4 (🔗🔗🔗🔗; [www.mac-compost.com](http://www.mac-compost.com)). Compost, which operates as a system preference, takes care of the aforementioned issues and adds a few other nifty features as well.

First, you can set Compost to delete files that have been in the Trash longer than a user-defined number of minutes, hours, or days. It can also limit the Trash to a certain size—for example, if you limit the Trash to 512MB, and later place an item in the Trash that pushes the size of the Trash over that limit, Compost will delete the oldest items until the Trash size is below the limit. You can also tell Compost to make sure that your boot volume always has at least a certain amount of free space, by size or percentage. If you're running low on disk space—not a good thing in OS X, which uses the hard drive for memory management—this is a handy option, as it will delete items from the Trash to keep the amount of free space above your limit.

If you've got multiple hard drives or volumes connected to your Mac, Compost will let you choose different settings—age limits, size limits, and free-space limits—for each volume. For example, if you've got a FireWire drive that you use as a scratch disk for Adobe

Photoshop, you'll want as much free space as possible on that drive—so you can tell Compost to keep that drive's Trash empty.

Compost also provides a few options for the actual deletion process. The Delete Locked Items option automatically deletes locked items without requiring that you unlock them first. The Delete Empty Folders Immediately setting gets rid of empty folders right away, no matter what your other settings are—the idea here being that since there's nothing in them, why clutter your Trash with them? You can also have Compost securely delete items from the Trash; the software uses the same secure-deletion routine as the Finder's Secure Empty Trash command. This kind of deletion takes longer, since files are overwritten multiple times as they're deleted, but makes it less likely that someone will be able to recover those files, even with special data-recovery tools.

What if you don't really mind having to remember to empty the Trash? Compost still has a few tricks up its sleeve that you'll appreciate. The most useful is its ability to empty the Trash for just a particular volume. By bringing up Compost's Trash Info window—accessible via a keyboard shortcut—you see a list of all mounted volumes, along with each volume's free space and the number and size of files in that volume's Trash. By clicking on the Recycle button for a volume, only that volume's Trash is emptied; the Trash contents of other volumes are left untouched.

Alternatively, if you install Compost's contextual menu, you can empty a volume's individual Trash by control- or right-clicking on that volume's icon in the Finder. This contextual menu also lets you delete files in the Finder immediately (without the need to move them to the Trash).

Compost also includes an optional menu-bar menu that provides quick access to a number of its features: viewing the Trash Info window, emptying Trash from a specific volume, opening the standard Trash window, and opening the Trash window for a specific volume. You can even empty the Trash on a removable volume and then eject it—a common sequence of tasks, in my experience—with a single command.

I wish Compost's contextual menu—or, even better, its menu-bar menu—were accessible from the actual Trash icon in

the Dock. But even so, Compost is what OS X's Trash should be.

## DICTIONARY

# LiveDictionary

These days many students spend a lot of time on the Web, because it offers unparalleled access to information on everything from core subjects to news and world events. But students—especially young ones—don't always understand what they're reading. Unlike children's books, news articles aren't written with a child's vocabulary in mind. Even those of us who write for a living often come across words that we aren't sure we can properly define.

Tiger includes a built-in, pop-up dictionary that works with Safari, but if you haven't yet upgraded, Eloquent Software's \$25 LiveDictionary (🐼🐼🐼; [www.eloquentsw.com](http://www.eloquentsw.com)) can give you similar functionality in Panther with less work. Hover your cursor over a word to bring up a floating text balloon—directly above the text or next to the Safari win-



**Pop-Up Definition** With LiveDictionary, Panther users can access a pop-up dictionary that's much like the one in Tiger.

dow—containing the definition of the word. (You can also set a hot key to activate LiveDictionary.) You can customize the balloon's appearance, including its opacity and font, and LiveDictionary can even speak a definition (in English only).

By default, LiveDictionary uses Princeton University's WordNet 2.0 English Dictionary. However, it also includes WordNet Thesaurus, and you can download and install other references, provided they're in the correct format (but

continues

## Tweaks for Tiger

Less than a week after Tiger's release, people had come up with some interesting utilities that let you customize parts of the OS—in subtle ways—to suit your preferences. Here are four worth a look (some are still in development, so the usual "use at your own risk" caveat applies; however, I've tried all these utilities on my own system without incident):

**Cage Fighter 1.1** I actually like the new look of Mail in Tiger, but if you're not a fan of its new buttons, you can use Tristan O'Tierney's Cage Fighter to replace them with borderless buttons similar to the ones Panther's Mail uses—you'll still be stuck with the rest of Mail's new look, but at least the toolbar will be a bit subtler. And if you want to revert even further, Cage Fighter can replace Mail's button icons and title bar with their actual Panther equivalents (free; [www.otierney.net/cagefighter](http://www.otierney.net/cagefighter)).



**SafariButtons 0.4.2** One of Safari's most popular features is tabbed browsing. As a result, one of the most requested Safari features has been a New Tab button in the Safari toolbar (which Apple still hasn't provided). Now you can get one using Jules Payne's SafariButtons, which replaces Safari's Report Bug toolbar option with a New Tab button. As a bonus, SafariButtons also lets you enable imageless browsing, which disables images for faster page loading (free; [www.plan8.org](http://www.plan8.org)).

**Amnesty Widget Browser 0.80b** Dashboard works as an overlay—you can view its widgets only when the Dashboard layer is activated. Mesa Dynamics' Amnesty Widget Browser adds a menu-bar menu that lists all available Dashboard widgets.

Choosing a widget from the menu opens it without the need to invoke Dashboard; it remains on screen until you close it. You can decide whether each Amnesty-induced widget should float above all applications, act as a standard application window, or become part of your desktop; you can also customize the widget's opacity (beta, free; contact company for final-version price; [www.mesadynamics.com](http://www.mesadynamics.com)).

**Dasher 1.0.1** To be honest, the idea of a Dashboard screen saver never crossed my mind. But it evidently crossed someone's, because that's exactly what Splasm Software's Dasher provides. After a period of inactivity, Dasher activates Dashboard. Move or click the mouse, or press a key, and it disappears, just as it would if it had been activated manually. Dasher even cooperates with OS X's screen saver—if you've enabled the latter, it will take precedence over Dasher's Dashboard activation (free; [www.splasm.com](http://www.splasm.com)).

you can use only one at a time). Despite its name, LiveDictionary isn't just a dictionary; it's also able to translate words via one of the included Ultralingua translation dictionaries.

LiveDictionary has a few flaws. For example, sometimes pointing to a compound word—such as *everything*—provided me with the definition of one of the component words (in this case, *every*) instead of the full word. And if you point to the first word in a common phrase, hoping to see the definition of that word, LiveDictionary will sometimes provide the definition of the phrase instead. For example, I pointed to the word *kitchen* in the phrase *kitchen sink*, and LiveDictionary showed me the meaning of the entire phrase; however, when I pointed at *sink*, it correctly gave me the definition of just that word.

LiveDictionary could be a great resource for classrooms and computer labs. The only obstacle to that is its price: \$25, which is reasonable for individuals but expensive for schools, since each computer would need its own copy. Fortunately, Eloquent Software is open to working with schools on institutional pricing.

## FLOATING CALCULATOR

### Calq 1.2.1

One of the most useful widgets in Tiger's new Dashboard feature is the calculator. Unfortunately, people who haven't upgraded to Tiger can't take advantage of it—and some Tiger users aren't fond of Dashboard. I recently came across Katoemba Software's free Calq 1.2.1 (👤👤👤👤; [www.katoemba.com](http://www.katoemba.com)), and it just might be the solution for both groups of people.

Calq is a handy on-screen calculator that waits invisibly in the background after launch; it appears only when you press a user-defined shortcut. (You can also activate Calq from a menu-bar item.) Once visible, the small Calq display lets you type in your calculations; then it fades away after a period of inactivity or when you switch to another application.

Although you can't use the mouse to enter numbers by clicking on calculator buttons, as you can with OS X's own calculator, Calq offers the basic functionality most people need for everyday use: you can add, subtract, multiply, and divide, as well as copy results from, and paste numbers into, the display. And for



**Convenient Calculator** Calq pops up only when you need to figure some figures.

those times when you don't want Calq to fade away automatically, you can lock it on screen.

Calq also offers a few ways to customize its appearance. You can choose where the Calq window appears on screen, the transparency of that window, and the period of inactivity that will cause the window to automatically disappear.

Calq doesn't have any of the advanced features that would allow it to replace a more full-featured calculator—in fact, it doesn't even have some basic features, such as a memory register, found in most calculators. But for simple, everyday number crunching, it's quite handy.

## DESKTOP TRASH ICON

### SideTrash 1.1

Getting back to OS X's Trash, a frequent question I get from readers is, "How do I get the Trash icon onto the desktop?" If



you're one of these people, you'll like Paolo Portaluri's free SideTrash 1.1 (🔗; [macworld.com/0569](http://macworld.com/0569)). SideTrash is simply an application—with a trash-can icon—that mimics the behavior of OS X's own Trash. Place SideTrash on your desktop, and you've got that icon wherever you want it. Just drag files and folders to the SideTrash icon, and they're moved to the actual Trash. You can even drag discs and mounted volumes to SideTrash to eject them, just as you can with the real Trash, and double-clicking on the SideTrash icon opens OS X's Trash. You can also drag the SideTrash icon to the sidebar of any Finder window for convenient access; dragging an item to the SideTrash icon in the sidebar moves that item to the Trash.

Two limitations prevent SideTrash from getting an unequivocal endorsement. First, the minor one: unlike the Trash icon in the Dock, SideTrash's icon doesn't reflect the state (empty or not empty) of the Trash. A more significant drawback is that if you drop an alias onto the SideTrash icon, it moves the original item—



**Trash Access** SideTrash lets you put the trash can where you want it.

not the alias—to the Trash (a limitation of OS X, not SideTrash). So keep this in mind when using the program.

## iDISK TOOL

# iDiskMenu 1.1.1

I may be in the minority, but I have more than one .Mac account, so I frequently connect to different iDisks. And when I help friends and relatives with their computers, I sometimes connect to their iDisks using their login information.

OS X makes it easy to connect to your own iDisk—but what about connecting to an iDisk other than the one listed in the .Mac preference pane? You could go through the iDisk submenu in the Finder's Go menu, or use the Finder's Connect To Server command and type in the appropriate URL. But a better alternative is Arizona Software's free iDiskMenu 1.1.1 (🔗; [macworld.com/0568](http://macworld.com/0568)). iDiskMenu is a systemwide menu-bar item that lets you define shortcuts to iDisks, WebDAV servers, and FTP servers, and then easily connect to any of those remote volumes.

Setting up iDiskMenu for an iDisk is easy: you provide a nickname for the menu

shortcut and then enter the .Mac user name and password. You can enable the Reveal In Finder option, which will open a new Finder window for the iDisk once it's mounted, if you want. Repeat the process for each iDisk you want quick access to. You can then mount and unmount an iDisk from the iDiskMenu menu. (You can also set up shortcuts for WebDAV and FTP servers, but note that as of OS X 10.4.1, the Finder's support for FTP is read-only; to write, you'll need a third-party FTP client.)

Choosing an iDisk from the menu, to mount it or unmount it, sometimes results in an error—an annoying but not serious bug (choosing the iDisk again usually solves the problem). Nonetheless, iDiskMenu is an effective utility that I use regularly. □



**Freedom of Choice** iDiskMenu lets you quickly access multiple iDisks.

Senior Writer DAN FRAKES ([www.danfrakes.com](http://www.danfrakes.com)) is also the reviews editor of Playlistmag.com. Send your thoughts on this column, or on things you'd like to see in future columns, to [macgems@macworld.com](mailto:macgems@macworld.com).

# Mac Gems

BY DAN FRAKES

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## AIRPORT EXPRESS BASE

### AirBase

As someone who's been reviewing software and hardware for a while now, I like to think that I have a fairly reliable gut reaction to new products. But I admit to being wrong about Griffin Technology's \$25 AirBase (★★★★; [www.griffintechology.com](http://www.griffintechology.com)), a stand for Apple's AirPort Express base station. When I first saw it, my immediate reaction was "\$25 for a glorified power cable?" But after using the AirBase, I've come to the conclusion that my initial impression was dead wrong—the base is quite useful.

The bottom of the AirBase is a weighted metal piece (the entire unit weighs a hefty 9 ounces), with a 3.25-by-2.75-inch rubber foot to keep the unit from sliding around on a desk or shelf. The top of the AirBase is made of white plastic and provides an AC connector that takes the place of the AirPort Express's removable plug—you slide your AirPort Express onto the connector to seat it securely in the AirBase. You then use the included cable to connect the AirBase to an AC outlet.

But what does the AirBase actually do that makes it worth a \$25 price premium over the AC plug that comes with the AirPort Express? First, it lets you place your AirPort Express on a desk or shelf—where it's less prone to obstruction by furniture and other solid objects—to improve AirPort reception (and it really works). Second, the AirBase puts your base station in an accessible location, making it easier to connect and disconnect Ethernet, USB, and audio cables quickly—or to grab the Express itself when you're heading out on a trip. Third, placing the Express's indicator light in a more visible location is useful for diagnosing connection problems. Finally, the rear of the AirBase has a metal cable-management loop that helps reduce cable clutter. Oh, and did I mention that the AirBase also looks great? It's definitely a conversation piece.

So I freely concede that my initial reaction to the AirBase was, um, off base. Perhaps the AirBase is just one of those products you have to use to appreciate.



**Elevated AirPort** Increase reception, reduce cable clutter, and easily view the status light of your AirPort Express with the AirBase.

## CONTEXTUAL-MENU ITEM

### Move Items X 1.5.7

Many Mac users would like to use contextual menus to move files and folders in the Finder—especially switchers, who had such an option in Windows. For those people, I suggest Naratt's \$15 Move Items X 1.5.7 (★★★★; [www.naratt.com](http://www.naratt.com)), which lets you move, copy, or make aliases of items from the comfort of contextual menus. (Move Items X actually comprises three plug-ins: Move Items, Make Alias, and Make Copy. You can install all three or just the ones you want.)

Move Items X adds Make Alias In, Make Copy In, and Move Item To options to the Finder's contextual-menu window, and each item is actually a hierarchical menu in which you can find a list of useful locations: mounted volumes, your Home directory, and your Favorites and Applications folders. You can also browse the parent folders of the current folder, as well as

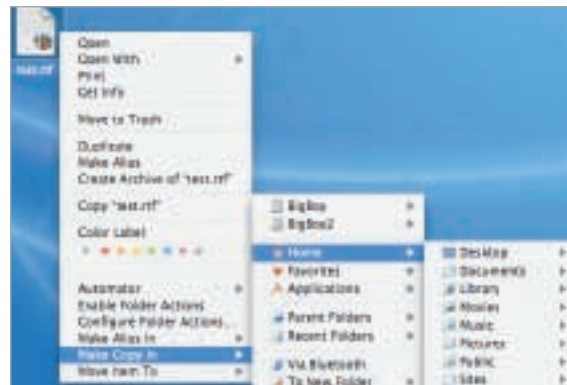
any folders you've recently accessed via Move Items X. The hierarchical menus allow you to quickly navigate to any location on your Mac; choose a folder in one of these menus, and Move Items X will copy or move the selected item to that folder or make an alias of it there (depending, of course, on which command you choose).

Move Items X offers two other useful items: To New Folder, great for creating a new folder on-the-fly and then moving selected items to it; and Via Bluetooth, for sending selected items to a Bluetooth device via OS X's Bluetooth File Exchange utility (assuming your Mac is Bluetooth-capable).

In Move Items X's preferences, you can opt to have the destination folder open in the Finder after the action is complete; view documents inside folders (so you can see if a file already exists in the destination folder); and choose which types of directories—volumes, Home, Applications, and so on—appear in Move Items X's menus. You can also modify the appearance of item names and icons.

Chances are these features alone will satisfy most people, but Move Items X includes an array of additional options for more-advanced users. For example, you can choose to show invisible folders in Move Item X's menus. And developers will appreciate the ability to display bundles and packages as folders, making it easy to modify their contents.

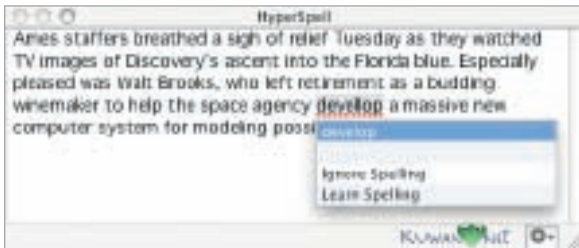
Move Items X is also useful for quickly cleaning up a folder (such as the Desktop



**In Context** Move Items X lets you move and copy files via contextual menus, just as you can do with text.

folder). Select a bunch of wayward files and then choose Move Item To: To New Folder: Create Default Location to create a new folder and have Move Items X place those files in it. The program can even name the new folder with the current date and time if you set up the preferences that way.

The one significant limitation of Move Items X is that it cannot move items between volumes—it can only copy or make aliases of the items. But if you've been looking for an OS X version of Windows' Send To menu for filing and organizing items, you'll like Move Items X.



**Spell Well** HyperSpell gives you OS X's spelling checker anywhere you can type text.

## SPELLING CHECKER

# HyperSpell 1.3.1

In Mac OS 9, if you wanted to check spelling in something you were writing, you had to rely on the spelling checker in your text editor or word processor, or you had to purchase a third-party spelling checker. Commercial spelling checkers are still around, and OS X has pretty good spelling features built in. But you can't access these features unless the application you're using supports OS X's spelling checker. Many Apple apps—such as TextEdit, iChat, and Safari—do, but many applications from other companies don't.

If you're looking for a universal and inexpensive spelling checker, Kuwan.net's \$10 HyperSpell 1.3.1 (🔗; [www.kuwan.net](http://www.kuwan.net)) is a good option. HyperSpell provides access to OS X's spelling checker from within any application—and I prefer its interface to that of OS X's standard checker.

To use HyperSpell, copy some text from any application to the Clipboard and then click on the HyperSpell icon in the menu bar (or press a user-defined keyboard shortcut). HyperSpell's window appears with your text automatically inserted, and the program begins its spelling review.

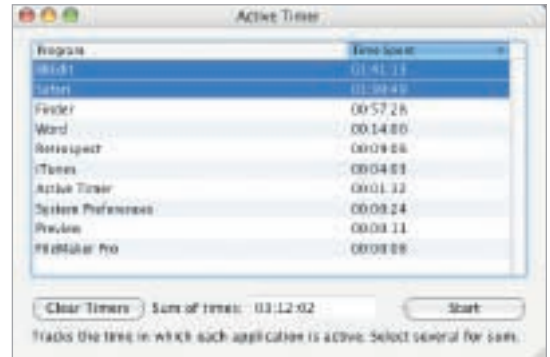
Unlike OS X's built-in functionality, which marks misspelled words but requires that you control- or right-click on each word to choose from among the suggested correct spellings, HyperSpell displays a list of spellings automatically for each word. You can use either the mouse or the keyboard to choose the preferred replacement word (or choose Learn Spelling to add the current spelling to OS X's dictionary, or Ignore Spelling to skip to the next misspelled word).

Once you press the return key to indicate your choice, HyperSpell moves to the next misspelled word, and so on. (Pressing return without choosing an option also takes you to the next word.) I like HyperSpell's approach better than OS X's—HyperSpell requires less mousing around.

After you've completed your spelling check, just switch back to the application you were working in—by pressing the escape key or using any standard OS X method for switching between applications. HyperSpell copies the corrected text to the Clipboard for pasting back into the original document.

I do have a couple of minor beefs with HyperSpell. First, when it isn't finding any more misspellings, it beeps, which can be confusing—a beep from an application generally indicates an error. I think a better approach would be to display an alert. And when correcting a misspelled word, if you want to type the right spelling manually—perhaps the built-in dictionary doesn't include it—you have to first exit the word-suggestion menu by clicking within the text; you can't simply start typing. After typing your preferred spelling, you then have to press the return key to resume the spelling check.

Still, it's quite handy to be able to use OS X's own spelling-checker features whenever you want, no matter what application you're in. And because I like the fact that HyperSpell lets you perform your check and make corrections almost entirely from the keyboard, I've been using HyperSpell even in those applications that support OS X's built-in functionality.



**Time Tracker** Active Timer can tell you how much of your day you spend surfing the Web.

## TIME-TRACKING TOOL

# Active Timer 1.1

Have you ever wondered exactly how much time you spend working in an application on your computer? For example, how much do you use Safari in a given day? There are plenty of utilities designed to help freelancers keep track of their hours for each project, but I just want to know how much time I spend in Microsoft Word, NetNewsWire, Entourage, and Safari during the workday. Why? Because I'm the curious type (but if you're the practical type, you might use it to track your productivity).

Robert Chin's free Active Timer 1.1 (🔗; [osiris.laya.com](http://osiris.laya.com)) is just the sort of simple timekeeper I've been looking for. It keeps track of how many hours, minutes, and seconds you spend in each application (specifically, how much time each program is active). Whenever you launch a new application, Active Timer adds that app to its list and begins tallying its time.

Active Timer can also add up the time you spend in all applications or a subset of apps; select the apps you want to tally, and the Sum Of Times field shows the cumulative time. You can use the Start/Stop button to pause the timers when you're away from your desk or otherwise not using your computer. And if you do need to keep track of individual projects, you can stop and save the running tally, and then open it again later to continue tracking your time—for example, you could create multiple Active Timer documents, one for each project, and then switch between them when you shift from one project to another.

Active Timer isn't as full-featured as dedicated project-tracking utilities, but it can do the job in a pinch—and it's free. I suspect that most people will use Active

continues

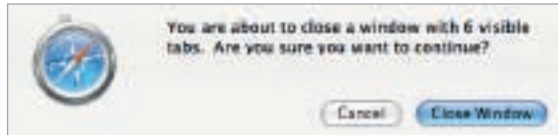
Timer just to satisfy that “What did I do all day?” curiosity.

### SAFARI TAB UTILITY

## Taboo 0.3

I love Safari’s tabbed browsing feature—I can’t use a browser without tabs. But I do have a couple of complaints about Safari’s implementation of tabbed browsing, including one major gripe. Have you ever accidentally closed a Safari window with multiple tabs open when you really wanted to close just one of those tabs? Or have you ever accidentally quit Safari by pressing 1-Q when you meant to close the current tab by pressing 1-W? If you answered yes to either of those questions, you know how futile—and frustrating—it is to try to remember what each lost tab contained.

I’m surprised Safari lets you do this. Given the number of places in OS X where Apple has implemented “Are you sure?” dialog boxes to prevent users from losing data or making irreversible changes, not having one that prevents such forehead-slapping flubs in Safari seems like an oversight. But until Apple adds this option, there’s Obsessive Com-



**Tab Saver** With Taboo, you won’t accidentally close a multitab Safari window again.

pulsive Development’s free Taboo 0.3 ([www.ocdev.com](http://www.ocdev.com)).

What Taboo does is really simple—it displays a warning when you try to close a Safari window containing multiple tabs or quit Safari with multiple tabs open. Never again will you lose a host of tabs just because you weren’t paying attention. (If you’re sure you want to close a multitab window, you can bypass the warning dialog box by holding down the shift key while clicking on the red close button.) Sure, some Web browsers, such as Mozilla’s Firefox, have had this functionality built in for a while, but I like Safari better than Firefox, so I’d rather have the feature in Safari.

I do have one complaint about Taboo, and it relates to the software’s installer. Because Taboo is a Smart InputManager Bundle Loader (SIMBL) plug-in, you should be able to install it either in the root-level Library folder (which makes it avail-

able to all users on your Mac) or in *your user folder*/Library (which restricts it to your own account). But the Taboo installer package doesn’t give you a choice—it installs the software in the root Library folder. Why does this matter?

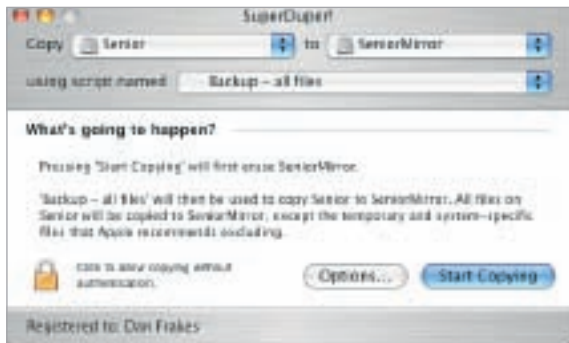
For one thing, it’s always safer to install software of this type—stuff that modifies the OS or applications—in individual user accounts rather than at the system level. That way, if the software ever causes problems, you can log in to a different, clean account to fix things. Also, sometimes new versions of Safari conflict with the SIMBL software. If you install an OS X or Safari update and it doesn’t work with SIMBL, Safari won’t work until you either remove SIMBL or download an updated version; you can’t do the latter if you can’t launch Safari in any account.

### DISK CLONER

## SuperDuper 1.5.5

When a major Mac OS release such as Tiger comes out, it brings up the peren-  
continues





**Clone Home** SuperDuper is the easiest way to clone your OS X volume—and maintain that all-important hard-drive backup.

nial topic of hard-drive backups—a vital part of any upgrade. But savvy users know you should always have a working backup of your Mac’s hard drive, one that includes all the essentials.

One way to back up is to *clone*, or make a mirror image of, a drive. This approach lets you perform a clean installation of OS X and use Apple’s Migration Assistant to restore your data and applications from the clone. And it has a bonus—if anything should ever happen to your main hard drive, you can be up and running from the clone in no time. Unfortunately, because of issues with invisible

files and permissions, you can’t simply drag the contents of one volume onto another to get a complete copy (as you could do in the days of OS 9).

In the past, my favorite utility for cloning my hard drive was Mike Bombich’s Carbon Copy Cloner—but it’s not yet fully compatible with Tiger, and some users find its interface a bit intimidating. Another option is OS X’s Disk Utili-

ty, which can make copies of volumes, but its options are fairly limited. I’ve recently found a new favorite: Shirt Pocket’s \$20 SuperDuper 1.5.5 (★★★★½; [www.shirt-pocket.com](http://www.shirt-pocket.com)).

Like Carbon Copy Cloner, SuperDuper lets you make an exact duplicate of your hard drive; you can even boot your Mac from the resulting clone. But what I like most about SuperDuper is that it’s easy to use for the most basic functions, and it offers advanced features not found in Carbon Copy Cloner.

For one thing, the interface explains in plain English what’s going to happen, so

you can be sure you’re doing what you want to do. For example, to make a standard clone (a bootable copy) of a volume, you just choose the volume you want to copy and the volume on which you want to make the copy—SuperDuper tells you exactly what’s going to happen. Click on the Start Copying button, provide your administrative-level user name and password, and let SuperDuper do the rest; you can watch its progress in the dialog box that appears. The resulting copy will be an exact clone of the original—if the original volume was bootable, the copy will be, too.

However, SuperDuper also provides a number of different ways to copy files and volumes, as well as several ways to customize the process. In addition to the standard method of cloning a volume, SuperDuper offers three other types of copies: Backup - User Files, which copies only those files found in the Users folder; Safety Clone - Shared Users And Applications, which copies all files from the source *except* user files and third-party applications; and Safety Clone - Shared Users, which copies everything except user files.

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With Safety Clone, both volumes share user and, if chosen, application files. If you want to try out an OS X update, for example, you can safely install it on the Safety Clone drive or partition—your personal data and settings remain on the original volume. If all goes well, you can install the update on your original volume; if something goes wrong, all your settings and personal files remain intact.

SuperDuper also offers several options that you can select before, during, and after copying. For example, you can have SuperDuper repair permissions on the source volume before beginning a copy. Power users and administrators will appreciate SuperDuper's ability to create a disk image of the destination volume, install a package onto that volume, or even run a script that customizes the destination volume—great for deploying a standard image to many computers, as in a lab environment. You can also choose to reboot from the new clone after SuperDuper finishes.

For most users, the most important options are the During Copy choices. You can set SuperDuper to erase the destination volume and then copy files from the source to the destination (the standard method); to copy only files that are new or that have changed since you made the previous copy to an existing clone, as well as delete any files that no longer exist on the original volume; to copy only newer files from the original volume to the destination, but not delete files removed from the source volume; or to copy only changed files (this option copies different versions of files—whether they're older or newer—to the destination volume). As a nice touch, SuperDuper remembers your settings the next time you launch it, so you don't have to set it up each time.

Finally, the SuperDuper manual is comprehensive and understandable—something I always appreciate—and even includes a section on how to recover files from a backup should disaster strike. The only major feature missing is the ability to schedule copy or clone operations—for example, I'd like to be able to tell SuperDuper to clone my hard drive automatically every night at midnight. The good news is that Shirt Pocket has promised scheduling support in the next major update. □